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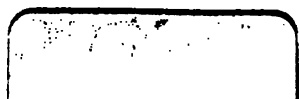
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THE LUCK OF THE IRISH

HAROLD MacGRATH

1. Fiction, American

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" WHEN I GET EM OUTSIDE, BE READY TO SHOVE THE BED AGAINST THE DOOR. IF I FALL, SHOOT TO KILL!"

THE LUCK OF THE IRISH

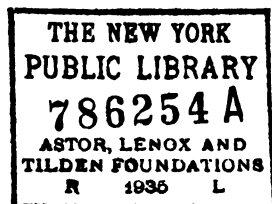
A ROMANCE

BY
HAROLD MacGRATH



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THE LUCK OF THE IRISH



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CHAPTER I

UPON a certain June afternoon, toward the end of the month, had you looked into the cellar of Burns, Dolan & Co.'s plumbing-shop you would have found a certain young Irishman by the name of William Grogan eying mechanically, yet professionally, the glowing end of his soldering-iron. There was a fixity in his gaze, a lack-luster in his eye, familiar to all psychologists of dreams. The iron fell upon the drain-pipe scientifically, because William had reduced the building of dreams to a fine art. Having set his hands to their appointed task, they proceeded to go on automatically, leaving his spirit free to roam as it listed. He was like that Hindu Yogi who could set his body grinding corn, take his soul out and go visiting with it.

William belonged to the supreme order of rainbow-chasers. All horizons were merely circles of linked pots of gold. It follows naturally that he possessed a fleet of serviceable magic carpets; and he sailed with superb confidence toward his

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rainbow-ends. If this or that one vanished, presto! he promptly arched another. It cost nothing. He was twenty-four, and that is the high noon of the rainbow-chaser. Beyond this age one begins to look back at the wrecks.

In parenthesis, before I go any further, do you believe in magic carpets, in our times better known as day-dreams? I mean, do you believe in letting yourself drift on the wings of a pleasant fancy at odd moments during a dull workaday? If you know anything about the preciousness of these little intervals between actions, when you stand or sit motionless and gaze beyond the horizon into that future which presently or by and by is to roll over the rim of the world with fulfilment—why, then, come along. For this is a story of a rainbow, part of which was found.

There are two kinds of poets, professional and instinctive; and William was a poet by instinct. He could not express himself in words; his rhymes were visions. He was by trade a journeyman plumber; inclination as well as necessity had driven him into it. He found Romance in lead pipes, sheet tin, gas and water mains. To his mind there was nothing quite so marvelous as the amazing cobweb of pipes and mains that stretched across the great city a few feet under the surface. Who but a poet would have stripped in fancy the masonry from the cloud-touching monoliths, and viewed the naked pipings, twisting and elbowing, bending and rearing, more wonderful than any magic beanstalk—water and power and light!

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Born in New York, thrown upon the streets at nine, at an age which poets (the professional kind) love to call tender, but which in reality is tough, William was, at twenty-four, a thoroughly metropolitan product. He was keen mentally, shrewd in his outlook, philosophical as all men are who in youth knew rude buffets, hunger, and cold. He was kindly, generous, quick-tempered, and quick-forgiving; and he was not above defending his "honor and territory," when occasion required, by the aid of his fists. An idea, entering his head, generally remained there; and when he offered his friendship his heart's blood went with it. He was Irish.

He talked in the argot of the streets; not because he knew no better, but because habit is not only insidious, but tentacled. It was only when he began to attend night-school that he was made to realize that he was not a purist; and, being ambitious, he strove to curb this passion for unorthodox English. On guard, he spoke sensibly and correctly; but if he became excited, embarrassed, or angry, he spoke in argot because simple English seemed to lack what he called punch. Strange lingo! All nations possess it, all nations that have vagabonds and thieves and happy-go-luckies; and William was a happy-go-lucky.

The carpet he was sailing on at this precise moment was the choicest Ispahan in his possession, his Ardebil: a home all his own some day, a garden to play in, a wife and a couple of kids.

Presently the smell of sizzling resin brought

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him back to port. That was the one fault with his ships of wool: they were always bringing him back to port before he really got anywhere. He thrust the iron into the cup of the gasoline furnace, and sighed. June was outside; and somewhere clouds were being mirrored in the streams winding along the flower-laden lips of green meadows, birds were singing, and gay little butterflies were fulfilling their brief destinies in the clover-fields. He knew that such things were going on, because he had read about them.

"Aw, and me here in this cellar!" he murmured.

He directed his gaze toward the basement window above him, toward the brilliant sunshine which broke in dazzling lances against the glass in the shop across the street. He was very fond of this window. It was the one bright spot in his rather dull and grimy existence in the employ of Burns, Dolan & Co., steam-fitting and fixtures.

Day after day, in rainy or sunshiny weather, he viewed the ever-changing panorama of boots and shoes: fat ones and slim ones, the smart and the trig, the run-down and the patched. He saw youth and age pass; confidence and hesitance, success and failure, joy and hopelessness. The step of each passer-by was to him a wonderful story whose plot was ever in embryo. Whence did they come, these myriads of feet, and whither did they go? The eternal stream which flowed past that little window! There was ebb and flood all through the day, and the real marvel of it was that each pair of shoes was going somewhere, had

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a destination and a destiny. Out of this pair or that William constructed the character of the owner; and he often builded better than he knew. He saw this strange world of his through the eyes of a Balzac; but he could only visualize, he could not transcribe his deductions or marshal them coherently. He knew that this man drank for the joy of it, that that one had something to forget; he knew when old man Hennessy had just lost his job and Heinie Stahl had found one. Here was a young woman going to meet her lover, here was one who carried a heartache; all in the step. And there was the broad, flat, shapeless shoe belonging to all sorts and conditions of women, from Tony Cipriano's thrifty wife, always bearing children, down to the wheezing, gin-soaked virago who scrubbed floors for her ten-cent pieces. Nor did he ever grow tired of the angular legs of childhood; these were the leaven of humor in a grim procession of tragedies. Wasn't that the baker's kid that just went by, hippity-hoppity, headed for the soda-fountain?

Out of this fantastical world of shod feet, one pair became of peculiar interest. They were feminine; and it was but natural that William should build him a romance. Their regularity of appearance first appealed to him; later he added little characteristics. She was young, sensible, and a wage-earner like himself. She was young, because there was always a spring to her step; sensible, because she wore low shoes in the summer and stout boots in the winter. There was no

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nonsense, no embroidered silks; old-fashioned lisle and wool were good enough for her. That she was a wage-earner there could be no doubt. At eight o'clock each morning, Saturday and Sunday excepted, she walked east with confident step. Never had he seen it drag or falter. It was a small and shapely foot, alluring, but not enticing. Perhaps the picture lasted three seconds; eastward at eight in the morning and westward at four in the afternoon, four or thereabouts. He pondered over these hours for some time before he fell upon the truth of the matter. She was one of the teachers in the public school near by. Saturdays minus and the gap of July and August could in no other way be explained.

For three years now these little feet had twinkled past the basement window. The odd part of this singular one-sided romance, William was never tempted to run up to see what the young woman looked like. He was canny for an Irishman. He rather preferred his dream. There were lots of homely young women with pretty feet. He hadn't many illusions left, this young philosopher of the soldering-iron, and he wanted to keep this one. Besides, what good would it do to "pipe her fiz"? If he spoke to her she might put him down as a masher and walk to school by another route. Let it be as it was, her world outside there in the sunshine and his in this smelly cellar. But, nevertheless, he often wished he knew a girl such as he imagined this one to be. One thing was certain: anywhere in the world, in any kind

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of leather, he would recognize those feet. And thereby hangs this tale.

I have forgotten to mention that William was an orphan. Once upon a time this condition had embarrassed him considerably; it had forced him to make his bed in empty halls and areaways, in stables, in dry-goods boxes; but as he prospered he outgrew this sense of isolation and this style of habitation. His father and mother had died within a few months of each other. The father, a sober, industrious Hercules, had been killed out in the railroad-yards where he had served as section-boss. The widow had received his last pay-envelope, and that had been sufficient to pay for his casket. Naturally, this casket had to have silver handles and a silver plate with his name and sundry encomiums engraved upon it lest in the final census he be overlooked. When the widow died the kindly neighbors saw to it that her casket was just as fine, which entailed a noisy valedictory of the Grogan household effects. Hence, on the night following her burial, William found himself under a counterpane of stars, lonely and distressed, but cheered occasionally by the thought that he would not have to go to school any more. William's inheritance was therefore but slightly in excess of what it had been upon his arrival: the clothes on his back and a growing boy's appetite.

To-day, however, all these difficulties were vague memories. I doubt if he ever looked back. He was of the breed who are always looking forward, hunting for stepping-stones. He drank a

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social glass of beer occasionally, smoked strong tobacco, weighed a hundred and ninety pounds, was as tough and sturdy as a coastal oak, and marched along the straight road, because if his hands were steeped in grime, his heart was clean.

Fifteen lonely metropolitan years, some of them fields of muck, others narrow and dangerous as tight-ropes, still others like the trail up the Matterhorn; and to come through unscathed, with a sound body and a sane mind! The truth is, William was born with a strong sense of humor, which, as a life-raft, has carried more human beings into safe harbors than the ten thousand decalogues of the ten thousand creeds. There was an ironic edge to this humor, however. Men who are born and bred in New York and begin life in the streets never quite lose the gamin's sardonical outlook.

I wish I could truthfully state that William was handsome. The clay was rich and beautiful, but the finishing touches would have barred him from a niche correspondingly as prominent as that given the Apollo in the Vatican. In repose his countenance was rugged; animated, it became merry and smile-provoking. There was a generous sprinkling of paprika on his pug-nose and on the adjacent sides of his cheeks; and his hair was so red that, given the proper foreground and perspective, he might easily have been mistaken for a Turner sunset. Perhaps the Master, having given William a perfect body, considered it unwise (for William's welfare) to add a perfect face. Even then, in one particular, he had relented. When

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you looked into William's eyes, you forgot the red hair and freckles. These eyes were as blue as Ionian seas, kindly and mirthful, and there was something electric in them, something which mysteriously flashed blue fires like the sea-water in the famed Blue Grotto of Capri; the eyes of a fighter who could also lose himself in fine dreams.

He read a good deal, borrowing his books from the great public library; and his head was filled with an odd jumble of classics and trash, truth and untruth; and his faith in what he read was boundless. But humanity could not fool him.

Out of this reading he wove a second magic carpet, nearly as attractive as his Ardebil. He longed to travel, to see Europe, Africa, Asia, all those queer places he had read about. He yearned for trains, steamships, donkeys, rickshaws, camels and elephants, jungles and snow-caps, deserts and South Sea islands. He wanted to shake down cocoanuts by hand, pick oranges and bananas; he wanted a parrot that could talk like Long John Silver's—"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"

"A fat chance!" he always murmured upon dispersing these tantalizing visions. "A home-run in the last half of the ninth inning!" Hadn't it taken him six years to save up eight hundred dollars? And how far would that carry him? About as far as the Hoboken docks.

Four o'clock! She'd be dancing by in a moment or two. Next week she would be going away on her vacation. He set the drain-pipe in the corner and put out the furnace. He pressed some

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"scrap" into his corn-cob pipe and waited. There she was! One, two, three and she was gone. Tan shoes and stockings and a bit of blue skirt. It was all over in three seconds, like one of those moving-pictures.

"H-e-y, Bill!" some one called, from up-stairs.

"Ye-ah. What's wanted?"

"Letter for you. Shall I throw it down?"

"I'll be up."

A letter? Who could be writing to him? He never had any bills; he paid as he went along. He rammed his unlighted pipe into his hip pocket and mounted the stairs. The young girl who acted as bookkeeper, stenographer, and cashier thrust the letter into his hand.

"Oh, you William!" she cried. "Some girl we don't know anything about."

"Aw!" He studied the envelope doubtfully. "Hargreave, Bell & Davis, attorneys and counselors at law. Say, Susie, have I been buying a sewing-machine, or have I fallen for some nifty book-agent's gab? I don't know any lawyers."

"Open it and see," advised Susie.

The letter was coldly brief. William Grogan was requested to call upon "the undersigned at his earliest convenience." Nothing more than that. William read it over four or five times, and it grew colder and colder with each reading. Lawyers, and after him.

"Where's Burns?" he demanded.

"In the office." Susie returned to her little grilled desk.

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William walked down to the rear end of the shop and rapped on the office door. Ordinarily he would have entered without formality.

"Say, Mr. Burns, what kind of bunk is this?" He laid the letter upon his employer's desk.

"Humph!" said Burns, who was practically Dolan & Co. also. "What have you been doing?"

"Who, me? Nothing. They haven't lifted me out of the cradle yet."

"Got any relatives?"

William scratched his head and blinked ruminatively. "Nobody but an uncle in St. Louis, my mother's brother; an old crab, who got sore because mother didn't marry the flannel-mouth he'd picked out for her. Never saw him nor heard from him."

"Well, you take to-morrow morning off and look into it. If there is any money, Bill, you bring it to me. There's nothing to these lawyers. You bring it to me."

"Sure, Mr. Burns. But it's a pipe there's no dough. Maybe they expect me to settle for the funeral; that 'd be my luck."

"Maybe it's a breach-of-promise suit."

"Aw, I couldn't get into the Old Ladies' Home without a jimmy."

"Well, go and see the sharps, and then come to me. Take your mother's marriage certificate along, while you're about it. You got it?"

"Ye-ah. I was only nine when she died, but she was some mother."

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"They all are, son, they all are. Haven't put your name on any paper?"

"Haven't had a pen in my hand since I quit night-school last winter."

"You never can tell," said Burns, gravely. "But if you've got tied up any way, I'll see what I can do. See you to-morrow." Burns chuckled as William went out. It was a great world.

William, in a distinctly restless frame of mind, left the shop and walked homeward. He was filled with foreboding. Some lawyers wanted to see him, and cold-blooded ones, too, if letters counted. Burns always said that if you went to court for anything, the lawyers got it. What had he done, anyhow? He combed his near-past thoroughly; but aside from two or three pinochle games over at the engine-house (two bits the corner), his record was as spotless and shiny as new sheet-tin. Oh, well, why borrow trouble? They couldn't get blood out of a turnip, and besides, Burns would see to it that he got a square deal.

Whenever he was worried or in the doldrums, William hied him forth to the near-by moving-picture theater. For an hour and a half he could lose himself completely. He could cast off trouble in the lobby, even if that little old man of the sea jumped on his back again as he went out. It was something to have cheated trouble out of an hour and a half.

Eight o'clock that night found him in his accustomed seat. With his toil-bitten hand propping his chin, he gazed in rapt wonder at a caravan of

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camels as they came superciliously down the sand-hills of the Libyan desert. Instantly the scene changed. He saw the bewildering peoples of the bazaars. Turbans and tarbooshes, flowing robes and sandaled feet, fruit-sellers and water-carriers, tourists in spotless white linen and sun-helmets; and presently through this swarm came the heroine on a scraggy little donkey. The villain pointed her out to his minions, and stealthily they pursued her until she was safe and happy in her lover's arms.

William wasn't much interested in the exploits of this heroine, whose salary was large enough to support a South American republic; nor was he certain that the Libyan desert and the bazaars were not located south-by-east from Los Angeles. But the camels were real; aye, real enough to whisk him away on one of his carpets from Bagdad, overseas, to that wonderful world he was never to see, much as the Irish soul of him hungered for it.

During the short intermission he idly studied the people about him. At his left sat a pretty young woman, in cool but sensible summer clothes. He spoke to her.

"It's a great business."

"Yes, it is," she replied, fingering the single-sheet program.

"A dime, and you can go anywhere in the world. I've always wanted to see the Orient."

He said nothing more, and gave his attention to the screen where the announcements of coming features were being projected. And because he

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stopped where he did he aroused a mild curiosity in his neighbor. She recognized that here was no masher type, a phase of the moving-picture theater that had caused her annoyance more than once. He was just a comfortable, every-day sort of young man, who had had a thought and had expressed it aloud to her merely because she happened to be sitting next to him.

A few minutes later she heard him laugh uproariously at the antics of a slap-stick comedian. She laughed, too, not so loudly, perhaps, but quite as heartily and humanly as this unknown red-headed young man. When the comedy was over he tipped back the seats for her, and presently she lost sight of him in the crowd. She forgot all about him, even as William forgot all about her.

The next morning when he entered the outer office of Hargreave, Bell & Davis, a small boy, not at all impressed by the visitor's ready-made tie and celluloid collar, jumped up and confronted him, coldly and alertly.

"Whadjuh want?" he demanded.

"Whadjuh got?" countered William, fiercely.

"Bertie!" called the girl at the typewriter, warningly.

"Oh, so his name is Bertie, huh? Well, Bertie, I eat 'em alive when they call 'em that. I want to see your boss."

"Nothin' leakin' in these offices," flung back the boy, observing William's hands and sniffing the faint odor of gasoline.

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"My name is Grogan," said William, giving the honors to the boy because he was in a hurry.

"Oh! Middle door; Mr. Bell," said the girl, her eyes full of sudden interest.

The boy shuffled to the door and opened it. "*Mister* Grogan," he announced, with fine irony.

"Show him in at once."

As he was passing through the doorway, William turned and lightly blew a kiss toward the boy, who, thorough sportsman that he was, recognized this red-head as a brother.

"Mr. Grogan?"

"Yes."

"Be seated." Mr. Bell was a middle-aged man. "You had an uncle in St. Louis?"

"Ye-ah; Michael Regan."

The lawyer nodded. "Your mother's name?"

"Amelia. Michael was her brother."

"Have you absolute legal proof that you are Amelia Regan's son?"

"Sure!" William produced the marriage certificate, pleased that Burns had suggested bringing it.

Mr. Bell adjusted his glasses. "This is Amelia Regan's certificate of marriage, but that doesn't prove you're her son, Mr. Grogan."

"Turn it over," advised William, wetting his lips and stretching his neck out of his collar, which had grown suddenly tight.

"Ah!"

On the reverse side of the certificate was the date of William's arrival into this mortal coil,

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briefly witnessed by the doctor, the parish priest, the father, and two neighbors.

"That's legal enough for anybody. We knew all about you, Mr. Grogan, but the legal end of it had to be satisfied. You're the man we're after."

"Say, what am I up against?" asked William, huskily.

"Your uncle died a month gone. He left his lumber business to his partner, but all his ready cash he willed to you unconditionally. Through us he kept track of you, your work, and your habits. I am, therefore, empowered to turn over to you the sum of twenty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty-six dollars and thirty-one cents. And I have the certified check in my safe at this very moment." Mr. Bell beamed upon his client, awaiting the outburst of joy.

But no outburst came. William's mouth opened and his derby hat slipped from his hands and wobbled about on the floor at his feet.

The dinosaur has been dead for some time; but if one had poked its head through the window at that moment and yammered at William, he wouldn't have been surprised; he would have accepted its advent as a part of the nightmare.

CHAPTER II

ALL the years of unremitting toil came back to him in panoramic fragments. He had always managed to clothe and feed himself, with a little left over for amusements. At half past six in the morning, summer and winter and spring, he was up and off for the day's work (with that cheerful and optimistic spirit which has been at once millstones and eagle wings to the Irish). . . . A fortune! Was he really awake? Wait a moment. He stared at the slate-colored doves that were sailing over and about the church spires near by, at the broad silver highway by which the great ships went down to the sea, at the blue mists of morning still hanging against the Jersey heights. Up from the street, deep down below, came the dull thunder of the Elevated. There was not the least doubt of it; he was wide awake; he could see and he could hear. Twenty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty-six dollars *and* thirty-one cents!

"Say, would you just as soon say that all over again—slow?" he asked in a voice which he knew was his, because he could feel it coming out of his throat; beyond that it was wholly unrecognizable.

Mr. Bell laughed happily as he reached for

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William's hat and placed it upon the dazed young man's knees. He was thoroughly enjoying this scene; he wasn't a bad man at heart; he was only a lawyer. When he put the magical slip of paper into William's trembling hand his joy was complete. He had imagination; he knew what was going on in William's head.

"Don't pinch me, I might wake up. . . . *And thirty-one cents!*"

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Mr. Bell, curiously.

William suddenly recalled Mr. Burns's warning relative to lawyers.

"Well, I don't know," he said, doubtfully. "I suppose I'm liable to raise hell with this thirty-one cents. The Great White Way, huh? Why, I can make the Subway blasts sound like bursting paper bags. Nix on the glow-worm, Lena! This dough is going to be old-age stuff, believe me. No over-the-hills for William Grogan. Every dollar is worth exactly one hundred and four cents. I've got eight hundred in the bank, and I know."

"That's the proper spirit. If you want any help regarding investments, come to me," said Mr. Bell. He was having a fine time; he felt that glowing satisfaction which is always warming up the hearts of good fairies.

"What's this cost me?"

"Nothing. All the fees have been paid."

"From the dollar-sign, then, to and including the thirty-one cents is mine?"

"Absolutely. And I wish you good luck with

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it. At four per cent. it will yield you something like eleven hundred the year."

"Some little old world!" William admitted as he fingered the check, turned it about and stared at it with ever-increasing wonder. "And yesterday I was wondering how I could hit the high places at Coney without going broke for the rest of the week!" He laughed weakly.

"Have a cigar?"

"Well, say!"

It was the first perfecto William had ever stuck between his teeth. His extravagance in this direction consisted of "three for a quarter" every Sunday.

He went down the elevator expecting every moment to "roll out of bed." He became obsessed with the idea that he was sleep-walking. He pinched himself literally and thumped his chest, which seemed filled with champagne bubbles. Oh, he was awake; and he was standing under the far-off end of a rainbow and the pot of gold lay at his feet! Out in the street he walked on silver flagstones, and the air he breathed was evaporated wine and honey. He was rich; no more worry, no more drain-pipes, bath-tubs, kitchen sinks. No more pothering over sums on the back of his pay-envelope, Saturday nights: so much for board and extra meals at noon, so much for washing, so much to lay away in the bank; no more that vain endeavor to stretch a short, limp five-dollar note over seven long days—spending-money. He was rich.

A wild desire seized him to go forth and spend

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some of this fortune, just to prove to himself that it was true. But he buttoned his coat tightly over the check and hurried for the Subway. William was patently Irish, but there must have been a strain of Scotch blood in him somewhere.

"Well?" inquired Burns, as William burst into the office an hour later. "Was it a breach-of-promise suit?"

"Ye-ah. But we settled it out of court, and here's the alimony." William flourished the check. "Say, I renig. That uncle of mine was no crab; he was pure goldfish."

"Well, I'm dinged! Nearly thirty thousand, huh? Fine work, son, fine work. And now I'm going to tell you the secret. I knew all about it. The lawyers were here pumping me, and you bet I told 'em you were a little angel. I didn't say anything, because I wanted you to get all the fun out of it. And now what are you going to do with it?"

"I was thinking maybe I could buy an interest in the firm here."

Burns scrubbed his chin. "It's a thriving shop, Bill. I wouldn't think of selling any of my interest."

"I know it's a good business. That's why I wanted to get inside," said William, regretfully.

"Say, wait a minute. Mrs. Dolan has a twenty-thousand-dollar interest. It pays her between six and seven per cent. Last winter she talked a good deal about wanting to pull out and go back to her folks in Ohio. Suppose I make a stab and see if

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she's of the same idea now? You come up to the house to-night and I'll let you know how matters stand. I'd like to have a young hustler about." Burns reached for his hat. "I'll take you over to the Corn Exchange and identify you."

"The Lincoln 'll do that. I got eight hundred up there."

"Keep it there and let 'er grow. Whenever you get a few dollars you don't feel like spending, slap 'em into the Lincoln. That 'll be the real rainy-day cash, son. When a man has two bank accounts he's got two good crutches."

"You're the doctor."

"Come along. If we can bring Mrs. Dolan around, you can buy out her interest, and I'll put you over the contract work. With your increased salary and your income you'll have something like four thousand a year."

"Me and John D., huh? Honest, Mr. Burns, my head feels like my foot was asleep."

"I understand. But you're awake." Burns slapped William soundly on the back. "Feel that? Come on. Better keep a couple of hundred in your pocket when you leave the bank. Bad luck to draw against an account the minute you open it."

So, with two hundred and fifty-six dollars and thirty-one cents in his pocket, William, upon being left to his own devices, wandered over into Broadway and took an up-town car. He got off at Forty-second Street, which he knew to be the city axis—that is, if you had money.

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What should he do by way of celebrating this momentous event? It certainly had to be celebrated. A glass of beer and a cigar? He laughed. He could see William Grogan, his elbow crooked on the polished bar of yonder great hotel, drinking beer and confiding to the blasé bartender that he had just deposited a fortune in the Corn Exchange and was aching to find some congenial soul to help him to spend it. He laughed, blew a kiss toward the hotel, and went on.

Nevertheless, he celebrated. A few doors south from the hotel he ran afoul a pipe-shop. He had always wanted a real meerschaum pipe; a lump of clay as big as your fist, with flowing mermaids emerging at various angles. The pipe was worth seven dollars in money and not a picayune in utility. Human teeth weren't grown that could stand the drag of that pipe. I know; I have seen it. I suppose it was not the pipe really; the fun lay in the fact that something he had always coveted and could not afford was now his for the mere physical effort of paying out the money. I believe the feel of that pipe in his pocket convinced him as much as anything that he was truly awake.

Pipe in pocket and peace in heart, he stepped forth into the sunshine again. Well, here was little old Broadway, famed in story-books and theater magazines and Sunday newspapers, the home of provincial millionaires and chorus-girls, Fort Lobster and Fort Champagne and Fort Tip. William had the native New-Yorker's tolerant contempt for the thoroughfare. He called it the

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"collar on the beer," the rat-trap for "boobs" and "hicks" and "come-ons," the coal-chute for papa's money. No doubt his prejudice had been sown and nurtured by the Sunday newspapers. Dutifully each Sunday they recorded the Broadway exploits of this tom-fool or that. The Great White Way: waste, extravagance, wild-oats, cold-blood and old-blood and lack-mercy. On the other hand, he admired the physical beauty of it; at night he knew it had no counterpart in all the wide world.

"Some old highway," he murmured, aloud, "but it 'll never dig a nickel out of my jeans."

He wandered on, peering into this window and that, full of lively interest in everything he saw. By and by he summoned a carpet. It carried his spirit in one direction, while his feet led him in another, toward his destiny. Without realizing it, he turned off Broadway and crossed over to Fifth Avenue. Here the fashionable curio-shops attracted him. There were art-galleries, too, and windows full of strange-looking carpets and rugs. Presently he paused before a window which had an art-gallery air, but wasn't. Printers' ink instead of oil ruled. There were great ships going down to sea, tropical isles, the Nile country, India, China, Japan; Arabs, camels, elephants, rickshaws, and bewildering temples. He looked up at the sign overhead.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he murmured. "Little ol' Thomas Cook and Willie Grogan! Well, say!"

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But he did not move on. With one hand propping an elbow and the other hand stroking his chin, he continued to stare at the brilliant lithographs and strange coins and paper money. Suddenly he knew what it was he wanted. He drew out his bank-book and eyed the deposit: \$28,500.

"Sure, Mike!"

He chuckled and stepped into the office of Thos. Cook & Son, who are agents for Bagdad carpets. A dozen persons were scattered about, interviewing clerks. There was one idle clerk, and boldly William approached him. He hadn't the least idea where he was going, but he knew he was going somewhere, that he was going to tie himself up in such a manner as to prevent caution from overcoming this marvelously likable impulse. All his life he had held himself on the leash, and now *bang!* went the leather. He swallowed two or three times; his throat was still dry from the fever he had acquired at the law offices of Hargreave, Bell & Davis. The clerk smiled reassuringly.

"Anything I can do for you, sir?"

"I want to take a trip around the world," said William. The words went down-hill rapidly, due to his inability to project them in a level tone.

If the clerk had turned upon him scornfully with a "Beat it, bo, while the beating's good!" William would have faded from the scene like one of those double-exposures which still mystified him at the movies. But the clerk continued to smile, and said, affably, "This is the right place for that."

Eventually, William decided upon the ship

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Ajax. The boat left harbor on August 15th for a six months' cruise of the world, landing at San Francisco some time along in February. The fare included all travel on land and water. It offered the tail-end of summer in Italy and the fall and winter in the Orient.

"That's the dope for me," declared William, calming himself. "But say, I haven't got the cash with me. How'll I fix it?"

"Make a deposit of one hundred," said the clerk, still smiling. William certainly did not look like a tour of the world, but this clerk had seen many a celluloid collar, and they were deceiving things.

The joy of taking a roll of money out of your pocket, money that was absolutely and wholly yours, money that did not legally belong to creditors, honest money! To pay out one hundred dollars for the first time in your life! To consummate a bargain that was to carry you to the far ends of the world, just by the mere wave of your hand! Rainbows were real, after all.

As the clerk accepted the notes, William observed the difference between his own and the other's finger-nails. He was thunderstruck! Certainly he could not go traveling with finger-nails like these. True, he scrubbed them twice a day, but the grime had penetrated beyond the reach of ordinary soap and water and bristles. He put the receipt for his deposit in his wallet, and departed, chin out, chest high. He had done it; no side-stepping now; he had to go or forfeit his

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hundred, and that he would never do, not if he had to be wheeled in an invalid's chair to the pier. And yesterday he'd been wondering if he could afford to go to Coney for the Sunday! Wasn't he the gay little bird!

But his fingers began to worry him seriously. Something must be done. Hitherto he had held in contempt manicured fingers; but Uncle Michael's legacy had switched his outlook on to the main trunk, among the thunderbolts.

There were manicurists in all the hotel barber-shops, so he resolutely directed his steps to a famed Broadway caravansary and sought the basement. In a corridor off the barber-shop he saw a row of little tables and at each table sat a pretty girl. He could see that most of them knew it; and all of them were chewing gum. That was nothing. So far as William knew, all women chewed gum. He was not above a cud himself once in a while. He entered the corridor and sat down at a table, assuming a nonchalance he did not feel, for on general principles William laid his course in wide circles where women were concerned. He was less bashful than suspicious. However, being a New-Yorker born, nothing less than the inside of a church could abash him. The girl laid aside her magazine and eyed him haughtily.

"Here's a real job," he said, spreading out his formidable hands.

The girl noted his fine eyes, and the ice around her lips crackled a little. She took a hand and studied it with frank doubtfulness. Then she

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looked at the clock. It was quarter past eleven. "I don't know," she said. "I'm off at five."

"Some job, huh? Well, I never came into these wax-works before."

"Thought not. I've a friend who might do it in less time."

"What's her name and address?"

"It's a he-friend. He works out at Bronx; manicures the elephants in the spring."

"Zowie! Some smoke to that one, believe me! What league are you pitching for? The truth is, duchess, I'm a journeyman plumber by birth, and an uncle of mine has just left me a million silver washers. I'm about to enter the gay life, and I want to do it with pink nails."

"Going to the funeral?" It was all in a day's work: Isobel de Montclair for the swells and fresh guys and Nellie Casey for the stevedores.

"Nope. The funeral has went. Now, laying aside the hook, can you do the job with these hams, Virginia style?"

"If it was anybody but you, Aloysius, I might say nay. But you'll have to buy me a new set of tools."

"You're on."

The girl stuck her gum under the marble top of the little table and fell to work. It was a job, but she knew her business. William gave her half a dollar, the first sizable tip he had ever laid down. The girl looked at the coin, then up at William, puzzled. The red hair, the freckles, and the celluloid collar did not dovetail with such prodigality.

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"On the level, have you been left some money?"

"Honest as the day is long. Not enough to buy lobsters every night, but enough for my uses. And some day, according to the magazine there, I'm coming back from a long voyage and marry you."

"On your way, Aloysius! I don't look like a girl who would marry for money, do I?"

"If I wasn't afraid the dye 'd leak through this bean of mine, I'd go and have it dyed purple. Say, what's all this noise about red hair, anyhow?"

"Don't ask me. Personally I ain't got anything against it. But I never saw a man with red hair that wasn't always looking for trouble *and* finding it."

"It's tough to be Irish."

"Irish? Why, I wouldn't have believed it! Well, good luck, and keep away from the bright lights."

"The same to you, only more so;" and William left the shop.

"Hey, Nellie, who's the chrysanthemum?"

"Was *that* Reginald?"

The object of these kindly attentions held up the half-dollar.

"Did he forget his change?"

"What's his home town—Troy?"

"Aw, you girls make me weary! You can't tell a real man from a tailor's dummy, take it from me, free of charge." Nellie took her gum from under the table. "He may have red hair, but he beats Mike the baggage-man for shoulders."

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"Mebbe that's what he is, a trunk-hop."

The manageress in charge intervened. "You girls lay off that kidding."

From then on it became a series of sudden chuckles with William. These broke out as he walked the streets, as he ate his beefsteak lunch, as he idled an hour at a movie, as, later, he took the tube. Out of a perfectly sober countenance they rumbled, stirred into life, now at the sight of his hands, now at the feel of the crisp receipt in his inside pocket. For all that he chuckled over them, his hands were a source of real embarrassment. He was afraid to put them in his pockets, to touch the evening papers, to hang on the Subway strap. He was also certain that everybody noticed the discrepancy between his nails and his general outfit.

"A celluloid collar and ten pink nails! What do you know about that, Isobel? If I went over to the engine-house to-night, the boys 'd drop dead."

Of course he told his landlady all about his marvelous windfall, that he was going on a trip around the world, and all that. She cackled over him like a hen that discovers a pheasant in her brood.

"Willie Grogan, an' you stand there tellin' th' likes o' that t' me!"

"Nix, mother, I'm giving it to you straight. Look at this!" He showed her his bank-book. The Widow Hanlon gasped when she saw those noble five figures.

"God bless me, it's true! 'Tis glad I am for

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your luck, boy. My, an' you'll be wearin' dress-suits an' patent-lither an' passin' your ol' friends on th' street. Well, you were always a good boy. You'll not be leavin'?"

"Not on your tin-type! This 'll be my hangout for a long time to come. But, gee! I sure forgot about the dress-suit stuff. I'll see to that tomorrow. Anyhow, this rubber collar is headed for the ash-can. I never thought, with this topknot of mine, that I might set fire to it—eh, mother? And mum's the word to the rest of the bunch. I'm hungry and don't want to answer questions. Whadjuh got for supper?"

"Corn' beef an' cabbige."

"Lead me to it!"

The whole house reeked with the odor of boiled cabbage; but William was used to it. He knew that he was never going to play the snob; he was going through life simple and unchanged by his good fortune; he was never going to forget the old order of things, the plain, homely food, the plain, homely people who shared it with him. I'll wager he found more relish in his corned beef and cabbage that night than ever Lucullus found in his nightingales' tongues.

After supper he went to the home of his employer. Mrs. Dolan was ready to sell; the transfer could be made on the morrow. This news delighted William. But he did not tell Burns about his visit to Cook's. He thought it wiser to say nothing until after the transfer was drawn up and signed. Somewhere around eleven he started

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for home afoot. His boarding-house was only a mile away, and walking was always good on summer nights.

Along his route on one of the streets which cut Broadway, there was a restaurant famed for its quiet and remoteness from the town's glitter. William knew something about it. He had passed it dozens of times. Other men's wives and other wives' husbands patronized this restaurant, so it was said.

William was perhaps within ten feet of the restaurant when he paused. Through the painted screened windows came the strange surging melodies of a Magyar rhapsody. William loved music; even the thin pinkapank of the hurdy-gurdies held charm for him. As he listened to this wild gipsy music it seemed as though his senses had been gathered up and swept into the gipsy hills themselves, through the forests on the forewings of a storm, to be caught by the tempest itself and swirled, buffeted, smothered, finally to be let down gently into the succeeding calm; all as elusive as the shadows which tumble over the pebbled floor of a brook.

"Gee! but that was great!" he murmured, leaning against the lamp-post. He hoped there might be more of it.

Suddenly the upper door opened and a young woman came hurriedly down the steps. The moment she reached the sidewalk she started off at a brisk run. Her hat obscured her features. William got a whiff of lavender as she whisked

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by. Had hubby turned up? he wondered, cynically.

As a rule William always walked on. He never meddled with an affair he knew nothing about, being a New-Yorker. To-night, however, he was in a mischievous mood. He'd see what the game was.

A man in evening dress came out, looked east and west, and ran down to the sidewalk. He did not pursue the young woman, for the very reason that William stood in his way.

"Nothing doing, bo," he said, quietly. "When a young lady hits into the bleachers like that, she's off for the home-plate."

"Who the devil are you? Get out of my way."

"Beat it. I don't like your accent. Handsome-Is."

"Will you stand aside? Or, is this a hold-up?"

"Ye-ah, it's a kind of a hold-up. But what are you doing off your beat? What's the matter with old Forty-second Street stuff? Ain't they young enough?"

"Why, damn your impudence. . . ."

"Sir Hurlbert, unsay them cruel woids." Suddenly the banter left William's voice. "Listen to me. That young girl was running away from you; I don't need any inside information to get that. It's a hunch. Now, there's just two things on the card. Either you sashay back to your bucket of suds or you take the flat of my lily-white on your kazoozle. Are you wise?"

Had the stranger spoken gruffly that the young

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woman under discussion was his wife, William would have side-stepped the issue and gone on. But the hesitance, the indecision, were enough to convince William that this was an old story.

"Well, bo?"

The man shrugged, turned abruptly, and re-entered the restaurant.

"A good hunch," said William, eying the door speculatively. "Well, Bill, let's waltz."

And waltz he did. Not that he was afraid, but these upper Broadway swells had a way of convincing the police that the *hoi polloi* (which included William) were eternally in the wrong, no matter what the argument might be, and he appreciated the weakness of his case. The girl had disappeared, and it was up to him to follow her example.

His "Haw-haw!" suddenly broke the silence in the deserted street. A seven-dollar meerschaum and a trip around the world!

"And ten pink nails, Isobel! The luck of the Irish."

CHAPTER III

AFTER a few blocks he let down his stride to an amble and began his favorite pastime—building castles. And always there was a garden, a wife, and a couple of kids. For why should he build castles but for these? He looked up at the spangled canopy of the night. He saw two little brown shoes step lightly from star to star; one-two-three, and they were gone. His school-teacher; there was the girl for you; no nonsense about her, always on the job. Where did she go on her vacations? And what had really restrained him from going up into the street just once for a peek at her? Perhaps it was the fear that his fatal beauty would have blasted her where she stood. Oh, well; perhaps the Lord had made the majority of human beings homely so that some real work could be done. Handsome-Is was always crawling under the job, watching the clock, and beating it five minutes before closing hour.

His thought veered suddenly into another channel. The picture of the young woman in flight returned.

Poor, silly little butterflies, didn't they have any sense? Wasn't there anybody to look after them and warn them of the pitfalls? Or were

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most of them alone in the world? William cogitated seriously. He was tolerably familiar with the street scenes at night. He knew the breed, too, of the man with whom he had just clashed. Fine manners, sympathy, patience, money, and good looks, and hearts as black as ink-pots; and the silly little fools thought they saw the golden knight. Most of these children came in from the country and the small cities, to become great actresses, musicians, painters. William wondered how many of them were able to live at all. It always seemed that when they were loneliest, old Cow-Hoof came around the corner to cheer them up.

"And they fall for guys like that," he murmured. He couldn't understand. "They wouldn't look at me through a telescope, not if I had diamonds on both hands. It's looks, that's what gets 'em; looks, soft-soap. They run into every kind of danger with blinders on. They ain't any of 'em bad, just curious and lonesome. Aw, hell!"

William never dwelt long upon any subject, especially if it were distasteful. He began to chuckle. Perhaps this was the fatal hour, according to that clairvoyant. A few nights since he and some of the engine-house boys off duty had paid a visit to a near-by clairvoyant for the lark of it. The signs of his horoscope had been portentous (at fifty cents); there would be some money (they never said how much, being conservative), and the influence of the planets Venus and Mars would soon be felt. Well, he had the money

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all right; he was now ready for both Venus and Mars. Mars was all right; he had been born under that planet, no doubt, been scrapping as far back as he could remember. Any clairvoyant with a true eye for business could get away with that line of talk after one glance at his topknot. But this Venus stuff was to laugh; pure bunk. And, my, my! the poor simps who went to clairvoyants and believed in 'em. Ye-ah!

As he entered his room, murmuring something about "the new-mown hay for his," he sniffed the boiled cabbage. He smacked his lips over the recollection of his dinner. Nobody could cook corned beef and cabbage like Ma Hanlon.

I've often wondered if Bayard, or Quixote, or Roland ate New England dinners on Thursdays. William generally did.

At four o'clock the following afternoon William Grogan signed his name to certain documents and thereupon became a legal member of the firm of Burns, Dolan & Co.

"And now, partner, what's on the program?" asked Burns, as he and William sat down before their beer in the little saloon where Burns usually ate his lunches.

"Well," said William, after some deliberation, "I'm going to take a vacation."

"Sure. What are you going to do—go fishing?"

"Nope. I'm going around the world, Mr. Burns."

"Huh? What are you giving me?"

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"Surest thing you know. You see, it's like this. I've got to go to get the idea out of my coco. My whole soul's been longing for steamboats and trains and the likes since I was a kid. Got to go. If I take the trip while I'm young I'll get all there is in it. This talk about doing these things when you've retired from business is all bull con. You know it just as well as I do. I expect to be gone six months. When I come back I'll be on the job for keeps. Now shoot."

"Son, you've knocked the breath out of me. You hiking around the globe, seeing the sights, living in hotels and ships, and coming back with your grip covered with labels! Well, that's Irish enough for anybody. You're the doctor, Bill. I've taken care of Mrs. Dolan's money for six years; I guess I can take care of yours for six months. You're a sly ruffian, though. You wait until you're in the firm before you shoot this stuff. All right; go as far as you like. Business is good. And when you come back, get married. It takes a woman to keep the dollars from running wild. How much are you going to take with you?"

"Three thousand. That 'll leave about five roosting in the bank. I want to ride the elephants; and, believe me, they'll be the highest I can find."

"Well, here's luck. But if you come back with any of that refined stuff, I'll force you out of the shop."

There followed a mild orgy in the shops of the haberdasher, the tailor, and the shoemaker; and

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while William's taste ran strongly to colors, he accepted the advice of the outfitters and battened down the hatches over his desires. He had never dreamed that there was so much fun in the world.

Long before the day of sailing his face became familiar to the clerks in Cook's. His questions ate up all their handy folders and circulars. The day before the departure he came in, bubbling with a fresh set of questions. He had forgotten all about "renting" an elephant. What were current prices for pachyderms by the mile? While the clerk was explaining to him that the Bombay office would have to take charge of that, William heard a woman's voice at his elbow. He turned. He never forgot faces. After a moment's digging, he recognized the young woman as the one to whom he had spoken that memorable night at the movie. He became interested at once.

She was pretty, but her face was pale and drawn, and there were dark shadows under her eyes.

"What is the next sailing to Naples?"

"Saturday."

"Nothing before?"

"The *Ajax* sails to-morrow at two. It's a trip around the world. Perhaps I can find you a berth on that." The clerk investigated. Presently he informed her: "We can put you in 247 with two old ladies. The lounge. That's the best we can do prior to Saturday. Second-class is all gone."

"A trip around the world," she mused. "How much would that be and how long the trip?"

The clerk named both price and time.

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"Very well; I'll take that."

"To-morrow, between two and three; steamship *Ajax*, tour of the world, San Francisco in February," droned the clerk.

The young woman pushed a flat packet of bills across the counter. These bills had the appearance of having dwelt in idleness for long. William saw her thrust the ticket into her hand-bag. What amazed him was that she did not give the ticket a single scrutiny. She slipped the hand-bag over her arm and departed.

"Well, what do you know about that?" said William to the world at large.

"Queer case," volunteered the clerk who had served the young woman. "All over in fifteen minutes by the clock. It generally takes a woman six months to decide when she wants to go somewhere. She starts for Naples and goes around the world!"

"What's her name?" asked William.

"Jones, the eternal Jones; and I had an idea that it was going to be Jones. A hundred thousand Joneses come in here during the year, and only about ten per cent. *are* Joneses. She looked to me to be running away from something or some one. A queer lot come in here. Well, it's all in a day's work. Pretty, too. Wager these bills came out of the bottom of a trunk." The clerk strode off toward the cashier's grille.

"Say," said William to his own clerk, "that young woman reminds me of some one."

"Who?"

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"Me. It took me only twelve minutes to say 'Good-by, Dolly Gray, I must leave you'. Huh?"

The clerk laughed.

"So I saddle the elephant in Bombay? Ye-ah. And say, have you got me labeled with the queer ones?"

"No, Mr. Grogan." The clerk laughed again. "You're the real thing; and I wish I were in your shoes. Everybody perks up when you drop in."

William pocketed his folder on Burma and departed. He found that he could not put completely from his mind the thought of the young woman. Her face haunted him persistently. Was she running away from her husband? Was there a Handsome-Is in the background somewhere? Like as not. William, it has already been remarked, retained few illusions; and he generally drew upon hard facts when in doubt. He never picked up a newspaper these benighted times that something of this sort wasn't going on. Wives were eternally running away from husbands, who didn't always bother to pursue them. The causes were as thick as the sparrows in the Park. Mismatched; the devil did a good job there, was William's opinion. The hullabaloo of a Fifth Avenue wedding, money and caste, they generally came to this, flight and scandal. Not that he was particularly prejudiced against the rich; but they set a mighty bad example for the poor, who were more or less imitative, like the apes.

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Wednesday came. William got up before dawn so as to be thoroughly awake when the day began. He had a lot of things to do. First and foremost, he had to pass away the time. He was for all the world like you and I were those bygone Christmases and Fourth-of-Julys; we never had any candy or fireworks left for the afternoon and evening. He bubbled with life. He had health and wealth and youth. And if the devil had come along just then and offered mere beauty in exchange for a tithe of health or wealth or youth, William would have seized him by the scruff of his neck and flung him into the alley.

I sha'n't attempt to chronicle all the happy, foolish things he did that marvelous morning. Among other things he visited the shop and bade good-by to every one. The little bookkeeper sniveled openly. She never expected to see William Grogan again. If he wasn't eaten by sharks, he would fall into the hands of cannibals. Burns poohhooed this idea; all Bill had to do was to keep his eye on his cash. There were worse sharks out of water than in it.

At one o'clock William went aboard. He saw his steamer trunk and grips safely stowed away in his cabin, which he was to share with two others as yet unknown. The little card at the left of the door read:

Mr. Grogan.

Mr. Greenwood.

Mr. Henrik Clausen.

He hoped that they were neither professional

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gamblers nor whisky merchants; outside of that he didn't care what they were.

He went on deck again and began to explore. By two o'clock he had been everywhere except in the stoke-hole, and he was saving that against some rainy day. He was unobtrusive; and the busy officers he quizzed understood that his interest was purely legitimate, though somewhat inopportune. There was something of the eager boy in William, despite his cynical outlook. The great steel cañon, which went down to the very keel of the ship, fascinated him more than anything else. The chief engineer was Irish; so William told him the history of his life and clung to him as long as he could.

It is a fine thing to go on a voyage of discovery, for the true pleasures of life are not to be found in recurrences. And to William, what marvelous discoveries were on the threshold, waiting to be unfolded before his eyes! Strange seas, strange lands, strange peoples; and, above all, there was that elephant with the silk-and-spangle cupola or thingumy on his back. There was, as you may readily believe, no corner in his thoughts given over to a longing to see the Roman Forum, or the Greek Parthenon, or Michelangelo, or Rafael, or Tiziano. I may as well confess right here and now and have done with it: William never went into ecstasies over the wonders of antiquity.

The living things, the quick, not the dead, stirred his interest. It is true that the pyramids stunned him; but this was due to his appreciation

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of the tremendous labor involved in piling those granite blocks one upon the other without the aid of steam-hoists.

At length he went down into the huge shed where everything was bustle and seeming confusion. Bale after bale and trunk after trunk sailed skyward, to disappear mysteriously into the bowels of the ship. People were hurrying to and fro, and there was much kissing and hand-shaking.

William suddenly awoke to the dismal fact that he was dreadfully alone. In all his busy years this thought had never before come home to him so keenly. There was not a soul in all the wide world who really cared what became of him, where he went, what he did, or how he died. Burns was all right, and so were the boys over at the engine-house, but they lacked something. He had no regret in leaving them; he would have no real joy in returning to them. He eyed with envy the noisy, excited groups of the happy family (see Cook's folders). These groups were made up of pilgrims coming down from small cities, country towns, farms, West and Middle West. They were making the trip in dozens and double-dozens; and shortly they would build little glass-topped walls around themselves, and woe betide the trespasser, especially if he happened to be a red-headed, lonesome guy named William Grogan.

He fell back upon his innate philosophy. All his life he had been jogging along on his own. Why worry over this bunch of male and female fossils? He was here to see the world; and if he made any

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friendships these would be by-products purely. After all, old Mother Hanlon would be glad to see him back. And wouldn't the rest of the bunch sit up and take notice when he began to gab-fest! "When I was in Hong-Kong I licked four chinks one night." Think of starting the fire in that off-hand manner!

All at once he remembered why he had gone down into the shed and taken his place by the gang-plank. He wanted to see if that girl came on board alone. He hoped she would. She looked too nice to be mixed up in anything shady. Funny thing, he mused, how you could spot a woman who was off-color. You couldn't give your reasons; there wasn't any way of explaining it; you just knew, that was all. This girl didn't look the part, and that was all there was to it.

She came into view at length. He sighed relievedly. There was no one with her. Lonesome kind like himself. She walked confidently to the gang-plank, looking neither right nor left. Her face was lighted by subdued eagerness; there was neither anxiety in her eyes nor dissatisfaction on her lips. William dropped in behind her, rather automatically.

A well-dressed man, a fat suit-case in each hand, crowded past him rudely. William stretched out a detaining hand, none the less powerful because the nails shone pinkly.

"Say, bo, why the unseemly haste?"

"Beg pardon!" mumbled the offender, none too politely, as he wrenched himself loose and went on.

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"Well, if that guy's with us," thought William, "how we're going to love each other by the time we get to Bombay! For a nickel. . . ."

M-m-m-m! boomed the whistle. William ducked instinctively, and hurried on board.

"Nothing the matter with the old lady's lungs. That was some toot! Well, I guess this is good-bye to little New York. See you later!"

As the ship drew out into the river he stood in the waist, watching the men close the hatches. He chanced to look up toward the promenade-deck. A young woman was in the act of crossing from starboard to port. The first thing that came into his range of vision was a pair of twinkling tan shoes. This range of vision, be it noted, was identical to that he had from his cellar window. His heart gave a great bound. His school-teacher was on board!

CHAPTER IV

WILLIAM was never able to explain with any lucidity why he leaped so abruptly to such a conclusion. He just knew, that was all. He had seen those feet go past his cellar window too many times to have the slightest doubt of their identity.

He had not seen her face, the railing having cut across that and obscured it. But there was no reason on earth why he shouldn't see the face now, after waiting for three years. So he sprang up the ladder, thrilling in every pulse. There she was, leaning against the port rail, staring westward at the pearly smudge hanging over the receding city. William had never heard of Medusa, nor the shield of Perseus. He was, nevertheless, turned into stone for two consecutive minutes. There is nothing gentle or gradual about disillusion; it is a blow, swift and hurtful. William stood up under it passably well, however.

Yonder was his school-teacher, without doubt; but she was also the young woman he had sat beside at the movie and whom he had mentally tangled up with runaway wives and all that. Finding his dream slipping from him, he made frantic efforts to catch hold and retain some of it. He simply could not let it go all at once. For

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three years he had endued yonder girl with the attributes which would belong, did such beings exist, to a demi-angel; and thus it was not humanly possible to let so fine a thing go to smash without making a fight for it.

So he began to mobilize excuses. If she was a runaway wife, then the husband was a brute; if there was a Handsome-Is in the woodpile, then he had been too clever for her; and so on and so forth. He reached around blindly for other straws. She might be the daughter of a rich man, running away to avoid marrying the father's favored suitor. This idea pleased him mightily; it restored his belief in his ability to judge humans, gave him a foothold on earth again.

Without his appreciating the fact, William had fallen in love with a shadow; and the unexpected appearance of the substance had thrown him off his balance.

He was perhaps more than normally romantic; probably by this time you have guessed it. Yet, on the other side of the scales, there was good ballast in every-day common sense. But there was in him a something latent, stronger by far than romance or common sense; we call it superstition. Trust the Irishman to have this kink in his cosmos. In William it had been a negligible quantity for a long time, but it cracked its shell at this moment and fluttered forth. This wasn't any ordinary accident, he reasoned; something was meant by it. For three long years he had dreamed about this girl, and there she was, half a

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dozen strides away. So William's superstition cried out that the Lord had put her there not without some definite purpose concerning one William Grogan. How the Lord intended him to act he could not surmise, but he was determined to hang around on the job until the call came.

For the first time in his life he recognized a real barrier. Here was a mixed-up family, bound together by a curious set of ties for six months. In a week or so, he cynically argued, everybody would know everybody else, family histories and so forth. And yet he hadn't the nerve to go over and speak to the girl. Why? Was it something in the fine profile, something in its expression that spoke of secret sorrow? He could not analyze what it was, but he knew, then and there, that he would never be able to speak to her with the freedom he had previously used toward typewriter-girls, shop-girls, girls in the lunch-rooms, and the girl in the manicure-shop.

He turned on his heels, fuming at both his lack of courage and this invisible barrier. He hated red hair and freckles. He looked at his hands. Well, they weren't so bad, even if they were as large as hams. The size of his feet had always troubled him; but the Lord knew they had to be big to carry around his weight. The inventory was highly unsatisfactory.

For more than an hour he wandered about the decks. He was like a friendly outcast dog, striving to catch some one's eye and invariably failing. He was all alone. Most of the tourists

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were gathered in groups, chattering and gabbling over red-covered volumes which later he found to be the works of an eminent author by the name of Baedeker. Once upon a time, urged by Mrs. Burns, wife of his partner, William had been inveigled into a revival meeting. These tourists looked like a revival meeting turned loose.

He sat down in a steamer chair, and he had no more than stretched out his legs comfortably when he was politely requested to vacate.

"My chair, if you please."

"Oh!" William got up and tried another, with the same result. "Say, where do you get these bedsteads?" he asked, with strained affability.

"The deck steward will rent you one, sir," he was crisply informed.

Once more William began his wanderings. He was little brother to Ishmael. Suddenly he laughed. They were all trying to bluff one another that they were old travelers or the most important people from their home towns. All pure bunk. Wait until the old blue lady began to heave; a lot of home-made halos would go back into the steamer trunks.

After innocently insulting the first and second officers, the chief steward, and the purser, William finally located the deck steward and demanded a chair. It was given to him abaft the deck-houses amid a forest of ventilators and at the side of a huge coil of tarry-smelling rope.

"Say, haven't you got anything down nearer

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the orchestra? I might as well be in the middle of Iowa."

"Sorry, sir; but all the other places were spoken for weeks ago."

William sat down and counted the ventilators, booms, guy-ropes, and ladders. He was learning. He had until this black hour believed that the chairs went along with the ticket. All right; if the cinders didn't bury him before they reached Naples, he'd find another spot. Beyond the coil of rope was another chair upon which lay a rug, a pillow, and some novels. Some one was going to share the desert with him. He stretched out his legs, assured that this time he would not be molested. Well, here he was, William Grogan, sailing toward his great dream—elephants and camels and cocoanuts by hand. Would there be any great adventures, the kind he had read about? Would they be shipwrecked and cast upon a desert island, with a tool-chest, a box of cigars, and a compass? Not in a million years. He would see the sights, spend a little money, and go home. There wouldn't be any boob to rescue from cruel gamblers; not on a trip like this. Besides, that was one of his rules, never to interfere with a guy who wanted to part with his money. And there wouldn't be any rescuing his school-teacher, either; no such luck.

For a while he watched the stern—what he could see of it—go up suddenly, hang for a space in midair, then drop like a plummet. By and by he dozed. He had gone blue-fishing several times

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during rough weather, and his diaphragm had suffered no undue activities therefrom. In fact, he was one of those fortunate individuals who are born good sailors.

He was awakened by the westering sun getting between some of the ventilators and striking full into his eyes. He sat up and blinked, looked at his watch—it was five—and glanced at the other chair. It was occupied. Moreover, it was occupied by no less a person than his school-teacher. He was now doubly sure that the mysterious hand of fate was in all this. What more convincing sign did he need?

A moment later the sun awoke her also.

"Pretty rocky seats," ventured William. "Wouldn't you like me to hunt up a better place?"

"No, thanks; this was my choice." She picked up a book and began to turn the pages suggestively.

But he was altogether too lonely to accept the subtle snub. "This is all new stuff to me. Never was a hundred miles out of New York before. But I'm a regular simp; no blankets, no books, no nothing. I wasn't hep to the fact that you had to have these things. I thought all you had to do was to turn the crank and start her. I don't even know how to get into the dining-room. One thing, though: they've bunked me with a couple of ancient mariners, and some morning I'll be accused of hiding the cork leg."

She smiled absently, and riffled the pages of the book. She could not very well tell him outright that she did not care to talk.

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"Say, I'm not bothering you, am I?" he asked, with genuine apprehension.

"Indeed, no."

She closed the book resignedly and looked straight into William's face. Naturally the point of focus was his eye. And she liked the pair of them instantly. The whites were as blue-white as skimmed milk; and she could not recollect seeing anything bluer than the iris. There was something at once rugged and comical in his features—the pug-nose, the freckles, the shock of red hair, and the outstanding ears. Immediately after this inventory she realized that the ensemble was vaguely familiar.

"Have I ever met you before?"

"Not in the hand-shaking sense. But I spoke to you one night at the movie just out of Washington Square. They were running an Egyptian play; camels coming down the desert, and all that Los Angeles stuff."

"Oh yes; I remember." And she truly did. This was the young man who wanted to see the Orient. And here he was, on the way. She was now genuinely interested. This ship was truly a barge of dreams.

"And, say," went on William, now that the ice was broken, "you're a school-teacher around the corner from—"

"School-teacher?" she interrupted. She sat up, her eyes wide; and there was a vague terror in them. William saw it, and a bit of the disillusion returned to sting him. "How did you know

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that?" She had phrased and spoken the question before she realized that it was a tacit admission.

"Oh, I guessed it," he acknowledged. "You see, it's like this. Every morning and afternoon you go by Burns, Dolan & Co.'s plumbing-shop, where I work. I'm in the cellar, mostly."

"In the cellar?" she repeated, dazedly.

"Ye-ah. And as you never came by Saturdays I took it that you were a teacher around the corner. I never saw anything but your feet—"

"My feet?" She was growing more and more bewildered. Was the man insane?

"Maybe I'm bulling the story. Anyhow, it was like this." He gained confidence as he went along. The terror in her eyes died away and vanished completely as he described his impersonal observations from the cellar window; and when he reached the climax—her passing from starboard to port while he stood in the waist—she lay back and laughed, first softly, then with full rollick. William laughed, too. "Funny kind of a game for a gink like me to play—huh?"

"I never heard anything like it! You are a real Sherlock Holmes!" Her attitude was no longer aloof. She was ready to hear anything this unusual young man had to say.

"Say, that guy Doyle can put 'em across the plate, can't he? I read him twice a year, along with Kipling."

"You enjoy reading?"

"Sure. Maybe I read too much. I don't know how to sift 'em. I read Dumas a good deal,

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Jules Verne, Dickens, Hugo, James Whitcomb Riley, Mark Twain, and Nick Carter." There was a sly twinkle in his eye.

"I don't quite recollect Mr. Carter."

"Aw, you haven't been a school-teacher without running up against good old Nick in between geographies."

"But I haven't admitted that I'm a school-teacher."

"Well, aren't you?"

He was a direct young man. "I see that there is no escape. Yes, I've met Mr. Carter, but I've never gone further than to stuff him into the paper-chutes."

"Poor old Nick! There's another guy I like—O. Henry."

"And why do you like him?" she asked, curious to learn why O. Henry interested this young man who worked in the cellar of a plumber's shop. The whole affair was so rich in novelty—to have watched her feet flit past his window for three years!

"Well," said the happy William, "he never tells me anything I don't already know. You see, I know his people—friends of mine, next-door neighbors, and all that."

She nodded. "Did you ever read a book called *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*?"

"Nope."

"It is an autobiography."

"Nothing doing. When I read I want action."

"But this is like *The Three Musketeers*, only it's real. It's the most exciting book you ever read."

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"Me for the wop."

"The what?"

"The dago."

"Oh. Where in the world do you men pick up such wonderful English?"

"Now you're guying me. Well, maybe I am a rough-neck," said William, dolefully. "But I've taught myself what I know, mostly. I went to school until I was nine, and then I had to hump myself. Went to night-school for a term; but that's the finish. And here I am, taking the grand hike around this little old walnut." There wasn't any barrier here that he could see; she was just what he always imagined she would be.

Her interest in this odd specimen of humanity grew. All goes well with a young man who aims to better himself, to improve his mind and condition. She could see in fancy the scrimping and hoarding to make this trip possible. Had not she herself fought for her pennies? Her ticket and express-checks represented the savings of years. In one mad moment she had taken the plunge, closing her eyes to the inevitable rainy days of the future. When she returned she would have to begin life all over again. Well, so be it. At least one dream should come true.

"If you like, I'll get the Cellini book for you," she said, impulsively. She did not know his name, but that did not matter. She knew that his eyes were of the right sort.

She swung off the chair, a lithe, graceful young woman, something more than pretty, something

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indescribably different from any woman William had met before; and yet he knew that she was a school-teacher, that she worked for her bread and butter the same as he did. This fact leveled the barriers, effaced any social dead-lines so far as he was concerned.

The mills of the romantic gods began to grind again. There was no doubt in his mind that she had come from a fine race of people, and they had willed the "come-down" to her. He didn't mean the Sunday-newspaper kind, money and all that. It was what these writers of books called breeding, something which did not arrive in one generation, but which had to go through the refining process of many generations. He was quite certain that he did not possess it, nor had his father, nor his father's father. Honest, hard-working, self-respecting people; they hadn't been any more than that.

He ran his newly manicured fingers through his fiery, wiry hair. He was determined to watch her closely. If breeding could be acquired, well, he was going to acquire it. None of your toplofty stuff, but as near the real article as he could reasonably expect to approach. He knew most of the rules, to be sure; but he lacked manner when it came to interpreting them. That's what he wanted—manner. It wasn't just guiding old ladies over muddy crossings; it was the way you accomplished it. The point in William's favor was that he knew what he lacked.

His school-teacher here on board! He had actually talked to her, and she had smiled and

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laughed and gone to get him a book; all in half an hour. Nothing had ever happened in books quite like this. The shipwreck and desert island weren't so far away as might be.

"And a homely mug like me!"

Romance and magic carpets! William was now absolutely certain that she was the rich man's daughter flying the mesh of the unfavored suitor. She was no runaway wife; that idea was totally wrong. He mapped it all out. She had run away and gone bravely to work rather than marry the man who was not her choice. No doubt there was a Handsome-Is somewhere in the background, but she had evidently slipped through his fingers. She couldn't laugh like that if she hadn't. Oh, he knew all about it. Good-looking young women, fighting their own way, seldom escaped that sordid adventure. Somewhere along the route they poked their pretty fingers into the web of the spider just to see him wriggle, and some of them got caught.

A rich man's daughter, running away because she loved her independence; a very agreeable fabric as William wove it on the loom of his fancy. Glory to the day he had stepped into Cook's!

A shadow fell athwart the deck, causing him to turn. The shadow belonged to the deck steward. The dapper little man in uniform scribbled on a card, which he slipped into the metal slide at the top of William's chair. On that card was written, "Mr. Grogan." William handed a silver dollar to the steward.

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"Say, how do you get into the diner?"

"The chief steward will take care of you, sir. If you want any special place, you'd better apply at once, sir. Thank you." The steward nodded briefly as he turned away.

William had an idea. He rose and went over to the school-teacher's chair. "Miss Jones"; it wasn't at all romantic. But it might be assumed. Anyhow, it did not matter. He turned to his chair.

She came back.

"Say, I forgot to tell you that my name is Grogan."

"And mine is Jones." There was not the slightest hesitance in her reply.

"William Grogan, generally Bill."

"I certainly am not going to call you that." She laughed. This was nothing but a big, lonesome boy. So she accepted his advances for exactly what they were. "Here's the book. I know you'll enjoy it. It will make Florence and Rome doubly interesting to you."

"If it's got action, that's all I want. It's mighty kind of you. I'd probably jump overboard if I didn't have something to read."

"There is plenty to read in the ship's library."

"A library on board? Well, that's luck. Say, have you seen the steward about your seat in the dining-room?"

"I don't care where I sit."

"Would you mind if I saw to it?"

"Indeed no." She might better sit next to him

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than next to some one who might be wholly prosaic and uninteresting. He would at least afford her a little amusement.

He gave a quick nod of his head—well shaped under its thatch—and strode away to interview the chief steward. He looked like a very strong young man, good-humored until aroused, and then she imagined rather a difficult customer. She had handled his prototype in boyhood; wild little animals, always ready to play or fight, impervious to anything but kindness. The Irish—how well she knew them, hot-headed, passionate in their hates and loves, with an exaggerated sense of loyalty, sensitive in the extreme, generous to a fault, and always blue-eyed. Perhaps she should have snubbed him for a day or so; but she, too, had been lonely. Had she not begun this long voyage for the very dread of loneliness? Had she not suddenly and desperately craved for strange scenes, multitudes?

At dinner that night he was at her right, at one of the beam tables on the port side. She noticed that he made no mistakes, that his table manners were good. On the other side of her was another young man, somewhere in the thirties. He was as far removed from the Grogan type as the moon is from Mars. Immaculately dressed, suave, polished, good-looking, he managed to divert her attention frequently.

William was dressed in his every-day clothes, and he scowled as his roving eye caught the flash of white shirt-bosoms here and there among the

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male passengers. Fully half the men were wearing evening dress. William was thoroughly fortified in this particular, but he hadn't expected to be called upon to wear this new regalia except upon state occasions, such as at balls, the meeting of dukes and rajahs. Well, to-morrow night he would not be caught napping. Besides, what did he care? His school-teacher was wearing the same clothes she had come aboard with, and she "laid 'em all cold on looks."

He recognized the man on the other side of her. It was the "fresh guy" who had bumped into him so rudely coming up the gang-plank.

"I'll get his number to-morrow," he thought; "and I'll eat my hat if it isn't 'shine'! I wonder how he got that seat?"

After dinner the school-teacher disappeared. So William, very well satisfied with himself and the world at large, strolled into the smoke-room with the copy of Cellini. He lighted a brier pipe and soon became absorbed in the adventures of the amazing Florentine.

At half after ten a man entered the wireless-room and despatched a Marconigram to New York. This message, all very innocent on the face of it, started the whirligig upon which a certain Irishman was to spin out various lengths of his mortal thread. Fate is a cynical gamester; for the man who sent that message and the man who received it didn't know William Grogan from Adam!

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning William went to breakfast rather early. He ate oranges, oatmeal, beefsteak and fried potatoes, bacon and liver, three squares of toast, and drank two cups of coffee.

William's cabin-mates were two old archeologists, bound for mid-Africa. Clausen sat opposite and eyed William with profound envy. To possess a physical organization that demanded such a start-off for the day! He sighed.

"Young man, I'd give a million—if I had it!—for an appetite like yours."

"Well," replied William, genially, "I guess it 'd take a million to keep it going. I've been the ruination of half a dozen boarding-houses." He folded his napkin and patted it down beside his plate, a thrifty habit he had acquired from years of living in boarding-houses where one napkin must go through three campaigns before it is turned into the laundry. "Say, Mr. Clausen, you've been over before. Ever ride an elephant?"

"Yes"—mournfully.

"What's it like?"

"It's like straddling the roof of a wooden house during an exceedingly violent earthquake."

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"You can't scare me," said William, as he turnstiled himself out of the chair and made for the upper deck.

Could anything have scared him that glorious morning, his appetite satisfied, his lungs full of fresh sea-air, the blood bounding through his veins? I doubt it.

William hurried away to his chair, but, finding that the school-teacher's was unoccupied, he immediately lost interest in the spot. He next turned into the smoke-room; nobody home there. Where were they all, anyhow? It was after nine, and not two dozen souls were up and abroad. Could anybody possibly be seasick on a day like this? There was only what the chief engineer called a fair beam sea running up from the southwest; not enough to spill the cat's milk.

He began to worry. Supposing she was seasick? That would mean a long, lonesome day for him.

A fit of restlessness laid hold of him. He tramped up and down the decks, explored the library, the barber's shop, and the steerage. In the end he found temporary anchorage against the weather rail, near the entrance to the smoke-room. He blinked in the dazzle of the leaping blue water, took out a Partaga, turned it over and over in his fingers, and grinned pleasurably. Back of that little roll of Havana was a twenty-thousand-dollar interest in Burns, Dolan & Co., master plumbers, about four thousand in the Corn Exchange, and a letter of credit for three thousand in his inside pocket, la-de-dah.

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He lighted the cigar and puffed luxuriously. He had read about Partagas. Sir Percival was always smoking one as he faced the lions, or Hockheimer, the theatrical magnate, as he gave a million in royalties to the poor playwright, or Reginald Van Wiggs as he heard his doom read in his uncle's will. William was always playing pranks mentally with some of the heroes he had read about. But that he, William Grogan, should live to stick this brand of perfecto between his teeth was like a dream in hashish. And once upon a time—two months since, in fact—his wildest dream would have stopped short of a box of George W. Childs's! Maybe it was a dream, after all, the ship, the cigar, the girl. Impulsively he brought the heel of his left shoe down upon the toe of his right. He felt it.

"I should worry!" he murmured.

The cigar slowly vanished in ashes. Truth to tell, while he enjoyed it to a certain extent, he would have preferred his corn-cob and "scrap." There wasn't any "kick" to these perfectos.

"Beautiful morning, isn't it?"

William looked up slowly. "Yes, it is."

Panama hat, white flannels, white shoes, silk shirt, just exactly like those chaps on the stage dressed. The man was good-looking; William admitted this grudgingly, but he knew in his soul that he wasn't going to like the man. Why? Oh, it was one of his "hunches."

"Going all the way around?"

"Ye-ah. Always wanted to see the Orient."

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"You'll enjoy it. I took the grand tour seven years ago. My name is Richard Camden. I believe we sit at the same table."

"Mine is William Grogan, and this is my first trip anywhere that amounts to anything."

"I envy you. Everything will be new and strange. I'm not going around myself. Called to Europe suddenly; and this was the only boat leaving at the time. I had to hustle."

"Ye-ah. I noticed that when you came on board."

Camden laughed. "I recollect bumping into you. I apologize again."

"Passed by the censor," said William, with a wave of his hand. "I wonder these gulls never get tired."

"Gulls never tire."

"Same class as suckers; I see. They keep coming back."

Camden laughed again. This red-headed young man was keen. Trust a New-Yorker to get the undertow. Merely the inflection of tone, and yet he had caught the ironic spirit back of the words.

"The young lady who sat between us last night at dinner is charming."

An indefinable something warned William to be wary. He had a natural distrust for well-dressed idlers, especially when they spoke of women. Was the man trying to pump him?

"You're right; she is. I've known her for three years."

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"Three years? Why, you're old friends, then!"

"Well, you wouldn't exactly call it that. What you might call a passing acquaintance." William considered that very good. "She's a school-teacher around the corner from my shop. I had no idea she was going to make the trip; and she was surprised to see me." Inwardly he communed, "William, you're some Ananias, take it from me!"

What was his purpose in these half-lies? It was too remote, too vague for him to define. He was doubtless endeavoring to throw some kind of protection around the lonely girl by letting the world at large know that William Grogan's two fists were hers for the asking. In a sense it was primordial, the ancient male idea, the warning off of all other males.

"I did not quite get the name," said Camden.

"Grogan—William Grogan," said William, a sardonic grin pulling at the corners of his mouth,

"I mean the young lady's name."

"Oh!" William eyed the racing foam below speculatively. "Miss Jones; not very hard to remember."

"You can't remember anything you don't hear distinctly. Will you have a cigarette?" asked the man Camden, offering his case.

"I roll a Durham once in a while, but no dope for mine. Say, I wonder if there's any professional gamblers on board? Signs are hanging up in the smoke-room."

"Professionals on a trip like this? Good Lord,

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no! They'd starve to death. They ply generally between New York, Liverpool, and Cherbourg."

"Well, that's too bad. I thought of course there'd be a few sharks in this school of mackerel. I've been building for weeks on seeing the gambler held up by some handsome outsider and the foolish young man, traveling with the firm's money, paid back his losses. Shucks!"

"I don't believe you stand in much danger." Camden narrowed his eyes as the smoke from his cigarette volleyed past his cheek.

"They couldn't take a peek at a nickel of mine. This little old letter of credit," said William, slapping his coat pocket, "is for expenses only. I play a game of pinochle once in a while; but beyond that, nothing doing. There's no something-for-nothing on my program. Work and cards don't mix."

"True enough. I like to gamble for small stakes, just enough to make the game interesting. But there'll be no chance on board the *Ajax*. There is, however, a lot of sport in double canfield. You can knock half a day galley-west with a pack of cards. Drop into the smoke-room to-night and I'll teach you a game or two of solitaire."

"That'll be fine. So long as I don't have to dig in my jeans, any kind of a game for mine."

"All right, then; any time after dinner. Good morning."

William did not leave the rail at once. He was puzzled. Anything which did not appear to come in the natural order of events made him suspicious.

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He knew instinctively that he was not of the sort of men the Camden caliber picked out for acquaintanceship, not even on a ship like the *Ajax*. What was he really fishing for? Why should this matinée idol bother to ask William Grogan what the school-teacher's name was, when all he had to do was to look at the dining-room chart? The puzzle was not solvable.

"Pumping me, all right. But I know all about pumps; and a lot you'll get up through my pipes, Percival."

Nevertheless, he sought his chair, vaguely perturbed; and it took him some time to get back into the final pages of Cellini. He had laid the book aside and was in a half-dream when he heard the foot-rest of the other chair rattle. He jumped to his feet.

"Good morning," he greeted.

"Good morning. No, thanks; don't bother with the rugs. You're a good sailor, too, it seems. Isn't it wonderful, the sky, the sea, and the wind? So you've finished Messer Cellini? Isn't that a tremendous chronicle? Think of being a personal friend of Michelangelo and his contemporaries!"

"Say, if he was alive, we wouldn't need to worry about white hopes. He wouldn't spill the beans over a pound or two in weight."

"Beans?"

"Aw, there I go, into the rough-neck stuff again! I've got so used to talking that way I can't help it."

"Perhaps you don't try hard enough."

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"Say, supposing you start in and tell me where I get off on the straight talk?"

"You mean correct you? That's a pretty large order. Suppose you make it a point not to use slang whenever you talk to me?"

"All right. But I'll have to let down easy. You see, I couldn't make myself understood if I had to give it up all at once. You understand me?" He wondered why she smiled.

"Oh yes. School-children have a marvelous faculty of picking up slang phrases."

"Say, but this Cellini guy—"

"What does guy really mean?"

"A guy? Why, a guy *is* a guy!" William rumped his hair perplexedly.

"Mr. Grogan, you don't know what the words mean yourself, half the time. How, then, do you expect us outsiders to understand?"

"I guess you've got me there, all right. Well, this Cellini—Dumas wrote a story around him."

"*Ascanio*."

"That's the boy. My! but the old geezer did some tall scrapping. He only ate when he couldn't get anybody to fight with. And I thought this Cellini person was an invention of Dumas'! Well, I'm on my way around the world, and maybe my bumps won't be strained when I land in little old New York again!"

By the time the steward's boy came around with the broth and crackers William had told the story of his life, the humdrum of it, his ambitions which had promised to die of attrition, and then the

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magical windfall out of nowhere. Her summing up of this serio-comic tale would have dumfounded him, for it consisted solely of the conviction that he possessed the most expressive blue eyes she had ever seen.

On her side, however, she had no confidences to exchange. Indeed, William hadn't expected any. He was perfectly content to find an ear into which to pour his own. It was something new to have so good a listener. She seemed to understand, too; and it was a rare treat to watch the varying expressions of her face as he went along. He was faring forth on quicksands, bravely and boldly, only he was not aware of it.

He amused her, scattered self-thought, made her forget, temporarily at least, the ghosts which haunted her. She really wanted to be alone, and yet she knew that in loneliness lay her danger. . . . An impulse came to her. Why not take this whimsical young man under her teacher's wing, and without his sensing it teach him what paintings meant, music, architecture, and peoples? Six months; within that time she might give him the basis of a good education. He was quick enough mentally; all he needed was direction. Perhaps this impulse was born of selfishness, a desire to keep her mind occupied. That she might spoil his life never entered her thoughts.

On Saturday morning Camden came out of the smoke-room, bored and irritable. He was about to go forward in quest of amusement when he heard feminine laughter the quality of which was

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rather tuneful in his ear. He paused. Then he stepped around the corner of the deck-house and discovered the Irishman in the act of describing some incident evidently humorous. Unobserved, he studied the girl's face. It was one of those singular countenances which in repose is pretty, but which is really beautiful when successive waves of animation pass over it.

He approached, bowed easily, and asked permission to sit upon the coil of rope.

"I heard some one laughing; and as there was no one in the smoke-room but professors and preachers and missionaries to whom the odor of tobacco is objectionable, I had to run for it. They have all the comfortable lounges, and the noise is like a church bazaar. I haven't found a soul on board yet who is going around the world just for the fun of it. You are not making the trip, are you, Miss Jones, for the uplift of the spirit?"

"I am not. I am going around the world to see things, to be amused, and to have other people wait upon me. To sit back and be waited on, that's been the dream of my life."

"Anything you'd like just now?" asked William.

Camden threw him an admiring glance. The very words had been on the tip of his own tongue. The Irishman had beaten him out. Then he deliberately set himself about the task of interesting the girl and blanketing William; and by the time the bugle announced luncheon William felt that he had been eliminated. Camden thoroughly enjoyed the play; but it was certain that the

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possibility of his becoming a friend of William Grogan was more than ever remote. William was no fool; he understood that he had been smothered, side-tracked, left at the post; but he took his medicine without murmur.

He never looked into his likes and dislikes. They formed instantly. Being a philosopher in the rough, he had no determinate phrases by which to express himself upon the subject. He had "hunches." He was not infallible by any means, but the margin of his mistakes was remarkably small. His "hunch" in this particular case was that Camden was a little too "previous." The East Side vernacular had a synonym, and naturally William preferred it. Camden was a "shine." And somewhere along the route he was going to prove it to his individual satisfaction.

The idea that he had been put on board the *Ajax* by a special act of Providence to watch over this girl became more fixed, an obsession perhaps. He had drawn a Friar Tuck circle around her, and woe to the man who was unwise enough to step inside.

He turned in early that night. He was half asleep when his cabin-mates came in. Neither would see sixty again. Greenwood was generally irritable, while Clausen, the Dane, was invariably amiable. What little William had seen of them convinced him that they were as tough as rhinoceroses. Over sixty, and still going back to the deserts with shovels and sun-umbrellas! And what was it all about, anyhow? He gave it up.

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Evidently they had been haranguing on deck. They were still arguing as they came in. Vaguely William heard "Nineveh" and "excavations" and "authority." The bone of contention seemed to be the restorations of Shalmaneser I. Finally the audience of one opened his eyes and leaned sleepily over the edge of his bunk. By this time one of the patriarchs was violently waving his shirt to drive home his point.

"Want a referee?" William asked, gently.

The two old fellows looked up, blank of eye.

"Who is this guy, anyhow?"

"Who, Shalmaneser?"

"Ye-ah."

"He was one of the kings of Assyria."

"Well, say! I thought maybe he was that new Dutchman who's after Hans Wagner's left mitt."

"Frightful ignorance!" grumbled the shirt-waver.

Clausen smiled. "Shalmaneser was born thirteen hundred B.C."

"That lets me out," declared the unregenerate one. "What's the matter with writing one of his descendants and putting the bet up to him? I wouldn't lose any sleep over a guy that's been dead all that time."

Old Clausen laughed. "I am sorry we waked you, Mr. Grogan."

"Passed by the censor," replied William, bunching his pillows anew.

"Sleep? Well, that's reasonable," mumbled

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Greenwood, dropping his shirt indifferently to the floor. "But still I contend—"

"Low bridge!"

The cabin became as silent as the tomb of Shalmaneser himself save when a roller broke on the metal sides of the ship under the open port.

Of course, William had to recount this little adventure the following morning, and thereupon had his first glimpse behind the corner of his school-teacher's past.

"Can't you see the pair of them rowing over every tombstone they come to? If there's anything left of the Tower of Babel, believe me, some bricks are going to be missing. What's it all about? Who cares? Thirteen hundred before Christ; some past!"

"Wouldn't you be interested to know how they got water up to the hanging gardens of Babylon, there in the desert? Wouldn't you like to know what machinery they had, how they manufactured their cloths, made their weapons, lived, worked, and died?"

"Why, sure I would!"

"Well, your ancients, as you call them, are endeavoring to find out these very things, to learn if humanity has really progressed in all these centuries. My father was a scientist and spent most of his time trying to find some method of overcoming gravity or neutralizing it. There is no other quest so interesting as that pursued by the man of science, the explorer. What hardships accepted uncomplainingly! For money? No.

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Great scientists are dreadful spendthrifts. They ask for nothing but the fact itself, and most of them die in poverty. My father did; and he never found his fact."

"I'm sorry. I suppose it's because I'm young, alive, and hungry three times a day. You never ran across a young archeologist, did you?"

"Not that I can recall," she answered, smiling suddenly. After all, she had no right to lecture him. She could have stated her facts without unnecessary heat.

"So you've had to fight for bread and butter, the same as I have?"

"Yes." And the little corner of the curtain fell, to be stirred no more that day.

William figuratively heard the tinkle of falling glass. His captivating romance lay shattered at his feet. She was not a rich man's daughter; she was the daughter of a man who had died in poverty. It took her down from the stars, but on the other hand it wrapped her in a fog. Perhaps the clerk in Cook's was wrong, after all; perhaps she wasn't running away from anything.

On Monday afternoon there were games; and with his usual enthusiasm William entered each contest, winning the pillow-fight astride a spar. He wasn't afraid to laugh, and his roars could be heard above the general laughter. He was like a boy of ten in enthusiasm, but behind this was the strength of a lion and the agility of a leopard. For the rest of the afternoon he was a hero to the children, who followed him about the deck; and

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when he sat down, his legs crossed tailor-fashion, and told them bloody pirate tales, his conquest was complete. Children and dogs always came at a beckon from William, and he was serenely unconscious of the magnetism which made this possible.

Camden and the school-teacher had witnessed William's exploits from the skirts of the crowd.

"Odd character," was Camden's comment.

"Yes; but strong and clean. And he *is* funny."

"You've known him long?"

"Oh no. I never saw him before we came aboard; but it seems he has known me for three years. He has a wonderful eye and memory. For three years he watched me go past the cellar window of the shop he works in. And, would you believe it, he identified me by my feet, never having seen my face!"

"What does he do?"

"He's a plumber."

"Ye gods!"

They both laughed; but her laughter ceased first. She became suddenly and guiltily conscious of the snobbery in it.

The beautiful days slipped past. Never, in all his dreams, had William found such fun in life. He made friends, port and starboard; even the aristocracy smiled at and with him. And he had his own secret fun, the gamin's outlook. There were always four or five kiddies trailing at his heels; and whenever he paused to play with them

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there was a strange beauty in his face. He loved children.

The only D. A. R. in northwest Kansas consulted him about taking up the collection for the seamen's fund; the only poet in southwest Pennsylvania complained to him of the inconsistencies of D'Annunzio's flights; the first mayor of Spottsville, Oklahoma, (Mr. Spotts) discoursed on our foreign policies; and the most important invalid on board drew diagrams of his various operations for William's edification. The two young Misses Doolittle (from up-State)—their father had served a term in the State Legislature—described William as "delicious"! The old men called him the human dynamo; the old ladies whose feet he sometimes tucked in declared that he was "a dear"; and the children called him "great." Such a man may be a "character," but he is never insignificant.

They dropped the Azores, and that night William ran afoul a most peculiar adventure. He had finished his second cigar after dinner—it was about eleven—and was taking a three-times-around before turning in. His thoughts centered upon his school-teacher, naturally.

This train of thought was abruptly and painfully derailed by human energy. Some one fell upon his back like the old man of the sea, out of nowhere.

CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM was strong, quick, and aggressive, but the sudden jab in the locality of his kidneys took all the fight out of him; the power, mind you, not the will to fight. The pain was excruciating; breathing was a torture. The kidney blow, as in boxing, was well known to him; but his unseen assailant had hit an unknown spot, causing a kind of paralysis. He felt his wrists seized in a grip which was like cold wire, drawn back, and clutched by one hand. It seemed incredible that any human being could render him so helpless. The free hand began to rifle the coat pockets. It was all very fast work. William subconsciously paid tribute to this. He had not boxed all these years without being able to recognize speed and skill. Even while this thought was passing through his head, the man behind gave him a kick back of the knee-joint; and the bewildered William went floundering among the stacked steamer chairs. When he crawled to his feet he was alone.

At once he took inventory. His wallet, with some thirty-odd dollars, was gone; but his watch was safe, as was his letter of credit, which he carried in the hip pocket of his trousers.

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He was thinking strongly. Held up and robbed as easily as though he had been a child! It was galling. What made him furious was not the loss of his wallet; it was the thought that he hadn't been able to strike a single blow. He rubbed his back tenderly and massaged the under side of his knee. Helpless as a babe in a cradle!—he, who had always taken pride in the agility of his legs and the ability of his fists! He was a bit vain of his strength, being Irish; and the blow to his vanity was a severe one. It was not a braggart's vanity, however; it was based upon a hundred and ninety pounds of splendid bone and muscle and the knowledge of how to manipulate these scientifically.

A jab in the kidneys, a kick back of the knee, and then, good night! He knew that it had not been accidental. The man had known just where to place those blows; and it was this fact that interested him. He had heard vaguely of the Japanese science called jiu-jitsu, but through ignorance had regarded its usefulness contemptuously. It did not occur to him at that moment that he had been treated to a very good example of its efficacy.

He sensibly did not waste any time prowling about. The play was over; the audience could go home. Whoever had robbed him was in safe quarters by now. So he limped to the companion-way and went down to his cabin. He found his ancients asleep, so he moved about carefully. He wasn't up to any Shalmaneser to-night. He

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crawled into his berth and lay there, thinking. He finally came to the conclusion to say nothing. His wallet, thirty dollars, and a few useless odds and ends were gone. But the next time any one jumped on his back he was going to lie down swiftly; and then woe to the man he turned over on! Which was very good counter jiu-jitsu, had he but known it.

He was late the next morning, and when he arrived on deck he found his school-teacher playing shuffleboard with Camden. They were laughing and jesting, and the girl's cheeks were dyed with color. William's "good morning" lacked its accustomed grin. He was not without a commendable sense of justice. Why didn't he like this man Camden, against whom he could find nothing save that he wore his clothes to the manner born, that he was slender, elegant, good-looking, was as much at ease with women as with men, and that nothing ever seemed to disturb his equanimity? "He's the canary in the aviary, and I'm the bull in the china-shop," was William's commentary. Was it the disparity in grace and outward appearance that set in motion this subtle antagonism? William always denied vehemently that he was ever stirred by class prejudice; and I honestly believe he was free of this incurable canker. Doubtless the feeling was, as I have already remarked, a matter of plain male jealousy.

The two finished the game, and Camden extended the stick to William.

"Try a game?"

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"Not this morning. Got a game leg."

"Why, I noticed that you limped!" said the girl. Immediately William's spirits went up ten points. "Stumbled down the companionway last night," he explained.

"Hunt up the ship's doctor," suggested Camden. "He'll give you a dash of liniment. Wrench?"

"Kind of. Where do you find this sawbones?"

"Next to the barber's shop. Any more?" asked Camden, turning.

"No, thanks," she said. "I'm snoozy, and I'll run around to my chair while you show Mr. Grogan where the doctor is."

"Come along, Grogan; we're dismissed."

They found the ship's doctor busily engaged. His patient was William Clark Russell, half-morocco.

"Game leg, doctor," announced Camden. "This young man wants your attention for a moment."

"What's the trouble?"

"Wrench, I guess," said William, diffidently. He was a poor liar.

"Let me have a look at it."

William rolled up his trousers leg protestingly.

"Why, man alive, that's no wrench! It's black and blue underneath. Something struck you there."

"Well, what do you know about that?" cried William. "All I know is I went down, and when I got up I limped. I was wandering around the deck late, and there was a fair wind."

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"Chair broke loose, maybe."

"Oh, it's nothing to fuss over. It'll be all right by night."

"Well, we'll take the safe side. I'll put a little liniment on it and give it a turn with the bandage."

"Aw!"

"I'm running this," retorted the doctor, reaching into the medicine-rack.

William submitted, but with poor grace.

Camden, a mixture of admiration and puzzlement in his eyes, stared at the Irishman. By and by a little pucker formed above his nose. The Irishman was lying, and lying clumsily.

"I say, Grogan, what really happened to you last night?"

"Huh?"

"You didn't stumble over anything last night, not with that kind of a bruise as the result," declared Camden, with conviction. "You're hiding something. What's the object?"

As for that, William himself was not quite sure what his real object was. He possessed the innate Celtic reluctance to whine over something which could not be remedied. He might start an investigation and sing hullabaloo, but doing so would not restore his wallet nor take away the pain in his knee-joint. Had money changed his point of view? he wondered. Was he too proud to admit that thirty dollars was to him a large sum? He smiled inwardly. A few weeks since he never would have permitted an affair like this to sink into oblivion for lack of effort on his part.

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The ten thousand metropolitan police would have been notified, along with William Burns. Perhaps he misjudged himself. The loss of money alone would not have started him on the hunt; but it went conceivably against the grain of the Grogans to let a man hold him up and get away with it scatheless. Here on board it was different, to be sure. There were no police. If he notified the purser, the poor devils in the steerage would come in for some unpleasant interrogations.

He stood up and tried the joint. "That's better. The liniment is cool."

"You're a husky chap," said the doctor, admiringly, and he gave William a friendly tap in the small of the back.

"M'm!" William grunted.

"What's the matter?"

"Another sore spot, I guess."

Camden laughed. "Make him strip, doctor. Something fishy about this reluctance."

"Aw, I tell you nothing happened."

"Strip, young man," ordered the doctor. "Come on, now; we've got to look into this. I want to locate that grunt."

Grumbling, William stripped to the waist. Camden whistled softly.

"Man," cried the doctor, "you've the torso of a Sharkey! H'm! Slight discoloration over the kidneys." The doctor fondled his chin thoughtfully. "I should say, Mr. Grogan, that you'd had a bit of jiu-jitsu. I was on the P. & O. line once. I used to run into a good deal of it among the

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sailors. They'd get into trouble on shore leave. You've heard of jiu-jitsu?"

"Sure."

Camden's admiration turned into keen interest.

"Well, Mr. Grogan, tell us what happened."

"I've told you," replied William, stubbornly.

"Jiu-jitsu all right. Toe and toe, there's not a man on board could beat you if you had any kind of a show."

"No credit to me," replied William, anxious to steer this keen-eyed sawbones off the track. So it had been jiu-jitsu? "I was born this way. My old man could carry a street-car rail with his bare hands. When I was younger I wasn't afraid of a rough-and-tumble."

"Had you been drinking?"

"Who, me? Nope."

Camden laughed.

"Oh, I've heard 'em laugh before, bo," said William. "But you can't lead me to it by laughing. Old John Barleycorn and me don't travel in the same 'bus. Hops on a Saturday night, once in a while, but I never wade in deep. No oath on mother's death-bed stuff. I don't like the smell of red-eye. Maybe I know the game too well. You see, I'm healthy; I'm full of life as a bull-pup! It's a fine thing to take a deep breath in the morning without feeling a kink in the small of your back. That's the reason I don't touch the stuff. I'll tell you," he went on as he dressed. "I'm Irish and red-headed, and fusel-oil's a bad thing under the vest of that breed. Take it from me.

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Haven't I seen 'em hunting for trouble and shedding the briny when they couldn't find it? Sure. And then going home and beating up the old lady? Sure again. An Irishman when he's drunk is generally fighting drunk. So we don't speak beyond a mug of hops once in a while."

"I wish I could say that," Camden confessed. "Many's the morning I've had that kink in the back. So you won't tell us what happened last night?"

"Nope."

"But some one else may get into the same fix," protested the doctor.

"Then let some one else do the hollering."

"You're Irish, all right. Do you box?"

"Couple of times the week. But, believe me, I've a lot to learn in the fight game. I thought I had all the frayed ends. Jiu-jitsu, huh? Well, when I get to Japan I'll have a look at that stuff. It's good." William laughed. "I ought to know. Do you know anything about that game, Camden?"

"I? Lord, no! Feel of this arm."

William felt of it. "Pretty soft. But that's nothing. I've known pugs who looked soft and could hit with the kick of a mule."

"Don't ever point that fist of yours my way."

"If I do," replied William, "you beat it. I'm Irish, red-headed, and none too particular when I'm mad."

"I'll beat it," said Camden, seriously. "Come and have a pop while the doctor and I have our pegs."

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The three of them trooped out of the doctor's cabin and headed for the smoke-room. As William drank his ginger-ale a brilliant idea popped into his head. He excused himself and sought an interview with the purser.

"Say, any Japs on board?"

"Oh yes; two second-class passengers."

"How old are they?" asked William, carelessly.

"Old! Well, I should say, sir, that the Jap was about seventy-odd and his wife somewhere around that figure."

"Oh." William's face clearly expressed his disappointment.

"He was the consul at New Orleans, retiring."

"Uh-huh! Thanks. Now, say, this is on the level; have you seen a goat with a bunch of burdocks in its chin-whiskers ambling about?"

"A goat, sir? But we don't permit passengers to bring pets aboard, sir. It's against the company's rules," said the purser, with lively distress.

"I didn't know that, or I'd left this goat of mine behind."

"I say," demanded the purser, brightly, "is this a bit of your Yankee spoofing?"

"Spoofing?"

"Yes. Are you trying to jolly me up—what?"

"Nope. Some one got my goat last night, and as this is the lost-and-found shop, I thought maybe you'd wise me up a bit."

The purser boomed a "Haw-haw!" But William shook his head sadly and turned away. Still, he had found out what he wanted to know.

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The Japanese consul, aged seventy, would be the last person to jump on his back. Doubtless he had been robbed by some deck-hand. Thirty dollars was a lot of money to lose, but whining wouldn't bring it back. So he came to the conclusion for the second time to let the matter drop.

I forgot to mention that every afternoon, from tea-time to bugle, William went to school, as it were. He learned quickly—the things that interested him; and his teacher thoroughly enjoyed the labor. It never occurred to him that he was having a lesson every day. But by and by it dawned upon her that she could hold him only when she described some great warrior or some tremendous battle. As for art, architecture, and general literature, William listened dutifully, but the information went into one ear and out the other. But battle—"the spot where So-and-so whaled the daylights out of Watchamacallem!" Cæsar, Hannibal, Alexander, Napoleon, Cellini, and John L. Sullivan—those were the boys!

She tried to get him interested in *Morte Arthure*, but failed signally.

"Aw, nobody ever talked like that. I'd be a fine false-alarm, wouldn't I, if I went up to a man, took off my lid, and bowed and gave him that kind of con. 'Noble sir, it pains my eyesight and my heart sorrowily, but I am about to hand you one in the slats.' And what would he be doing while I pulled that line of talk? Good night!"

"I don't suppose Nick Carter ever talked like that," she said, ironically.

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"Not so you'd notice it. The noble Nick didn't waste any soft-soap. 'Hands up, Wall-eyed Mike; the jig is up.' That's Nick's way. This Cellini chap didn't waste any guff that I noticed. When he saw a head he hit it."

She laughed. So far she had not found this amazing Irishman backward in the matter of retorts. He usually gave as good as he got. She liked him. For all his bewildering lingo, he possessed that rare attribute called personality. He was so breezy, so strong and active, that those about seemed to imbue some of the animal spirits which radiated from him. When she was with him she experienced a tingle and a zest in life. His voice and eyes were filled with electric fluids. It was too bad that he hadn't had the right chance in life. When she compared him with Camden, it struck her forcibly that the comparison was in the Irishman's favor. Camden soothed her, but his very soothing qualities seemed to arouse a subconscious irritation in her.

By constant reprimand she had succeeded in drawing William partially out of the morass of slang into which habit and association had thrown him. At a word from her he would have stopped smoking, worn his dress-suit at breakfast, forsworn his meat. But invariably, once he became excited or deeply in earnest, the gates would burst open. Never by any hap were his transgressions vulgar. She was well enough informed to know that his phrases had been conned from the sporting pages of the newspapers—baseball, the prize-ring, and

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the race-tracks, all morally harmless, but intellectually corrupt.

The day before they reached Gibraltar, Italy as a lesson was about finished. Of all the splendid names he had heard, only three remained clearly defined: Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Cellini. He felt genuinely depressed that all the others had been dropped by the wayside. And yet, if he had confided in her, doubtless she would have told him that to know a little of the lives of these three men was in itself a liberal education. The truth is, aside from being great artists, the three had also been great fighters, and that is why their names and deeds stuck in William Grogan's head.

"Italy! Say, that makes me think. I've got an old friend in Naples—Tommaso Malfi. He and his wife kept the fruit-store next to the shop. I used to play with his kiddies noontimes. And many's the dish of spaghetti I've eaten with the family. He made his pile, six or seven hundred, sold out to Cipriano, and hiked for the old country. He'll be glad to see little Willie Grogan. He used to call me Guglielmo Grogano, for sport. He tried to teach me some of his lingo, but I couldn't bat over .017."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Grogan," said a voice at his elbow. It belonged to the purser. "I found this wallet of yours."

William seized it eagerly.

"Everything there?" asked the purser.

"Ye-ah. Where'd you find it?"

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"Rather curious place. On the floor of my office. Some one had tossed it in through the port."

"Well, say, I never expected to see this again." William peered into the flaps. "Yes, sir, and there's Mr. Goat. Thanks."

"Why," began the school-teacher, when the purser had gone, "I didn't know that you had lost anything."

"I didn't lose it," replied William, balancing the wallet on his palm, a speculative light in his eyes.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Somebody took it from me by force. Pretty smooth Indian, if you want to know. The doctor says it's jiu-jitsu. Jumped on my back, and I didn't have a ghost of a show. That accounts for that game leg of mine."

"But why should the thief return the wallet?"

"That's exactly what William Grogan is wondering."

CHAPTER VII

WILLIAM was confronted with a genuine mystery, and he wasn't sure that he liked it. He viewed the affair from all available angles, but he could not find shallow water anywhere. A man, possessed of a scientific knowledge of anatomy, had laid out William Grogan as nice as you please and taken his wallet; then he had given it back, indirectly; but that didn't matter—the act, not the method, was the important thing. It wasn't a question of belated conscience. The man hadn't gone through that series of gymnastics for the mere sport of it. It was possible, however, that the hold-up man had tackled the wrong individual. But even then, thirty dollars wouldn't grow any smaller for that. William decided that it was not the work of a professional. Fat chance for that breed on board the *Ajax*, where the wealth of the passengers consisted of small bills, few and slim letters of credit. People who could afford to travel on their own, without the tender solicitude of Thomas Cook, had real bank-accounts. Finally he gave up the puzzle. There was neither head nor tail to it. Anyhow, he had thirty to blow in when he landed at Gibraltar.

Having resigned himself to the loss, the recovery

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was like finding it; and eternally the poor never save anything they find. William had mapped out a plan for spending only five dollars in each port or town he visited; spending-money, you understand; five in Gibraltar, five in Naples, and so on until he landed in San Francisco. He had written down this budget in detail and had sworn to keep within it. By this method of economy he would arrive in America with something over a thousand dollars. But to-morrow he would spend thirty dollars in Gibraltar.

As he was leaving the purser's office the next morning, after having wisely deposited his letter of credit, he heard some one exclaim, "Spain!"

He ran out to the port rail. Blue sky and blue sea, and a thin ribbon of salmon-tinted rock in between; that was all he could see. But there was some peculiar magic in the sight; it stirred a thousand little cells in his head. Yonder was the Spain of the Armada, of the golden galleons and black-browed pirates, of mighty conquest and quick decay; and here was William Grogan, news-boy, messenger, apprentice, plumber, seeing it through his very own eyes. One was a great historical fact; the other was a plain, down-right miracle.

Not until after lunch would they raise Gibraltar. Spain was all right, but its coast suggested spooks, vanished splendors, things which trembled nebulously on the far horizon of memory, therefore unsatisfactorily. What he wanted to see was something which had not only been great, but still

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was; and this would be the Rock; valor and war, grim battle-ships, cannon, flags, the sunshine on gun-barrels, and the lively racket of rolling drums. He was tremendously eager to see Gibraltar, and he had a reason singular among his several hundred fellow-passengers. Somewhere in the little historical military cemetery he would find the name of Grogan. Hadn't the Grogans died all over Europe and Asia and Africa, from the Napoleonic wars down to the Transvaal shindy?

As soon as the salmon-tinted coast-line became monotonous, he drew away from the rail and searched the decks for his school-teacher, but could not find her. Doubtless she was preening up for the jaunt ashore.

The daughter of a man who had died in poverty—the single rift in the fog which enveloped her. I must confess that William laid sly if innocent little traps, all of which she walked around serenely. That all was not well with her he had been assured frequently. The ruminative somberness which at times overcast her countenance—at moments when she thought she was unobserved—convinced William that she was unhappy.

There were no rings on her fingers; but William knew that married women no longer wore their wedding-rings year in and year out, as in his mother's day. *Was* she running away from something?

Once he had tiptoed around to his chair—it was at the hour when she generally dozed—to find her staring wide-eyed at a little chamois bag such as

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women carried their jewels in. At the sight of him she gave a little gasp and thrust the bag into the bosom of her dress. She smiled almost at once; but William would have preferred a frown. Was there anything in that chamois bag she was afraid he might see? The haste with which she had striven to hide it was not normal.

She was only twenty-two. Youth ought to have no mysteries.

Dismissing these unpleasant cogitations, William strolled around to the starboard side. Leaning over the rail were his two ancients. For once they were not arguing. As there was space in between them, William shouldered in, smiling as usual. He was not above hectoring Greenwood, a flicker of the old-time gamin in his heart.

In his way William was growing fond of them both, for he could appreciate that these two lonely old men were heroes in their quiet, undemonstrative manner. One had gone into the very heart of China, in the days when such an exploit necessitated the taking of one's life in the hand. And for what? To verify a bit of Sanskrit, whatever that was! And the other had crossed the Himalayas into Tibet for the prayer-scroll and death-mask of a Lama! William was still in the dark as to what benefit, if any, humanity derived from such adventures; but he could readily grasp that these two played a great game where the skirts of death could always be heard rustling.

"This is the life!" he said.

"You like the sea?"

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"Sure I do. But ain't she the cheerful old liar, though? Look at her now—mild as a cat with a platter of cream. But when she gets her back up, believe me!"

"Know anything about it?" asked Greenwood, the crotchety one. For, while William was not above hectoring him, he on his part was not above laying traps for William's ignorance.

"Only what I can see on top."

"Then what is down below does not interest you?"

"It wouldn't if I was anywhere near it," countered William, shrewdly scenting a trap.

The old fellow shrugged, but his companion smiled. And straightway he began to uncover the sea's floor to William. His descriptions were simple and untechnical. He liked this freckle-faced boy, with his boundless vitality, his fresh enthusiasm, his unfailing cheerfulness.

"All new stuff to me," William admitted. "But I thought that you dug up tombs and the like?"

"I do; but to all men of science there is nothing more fascinating than the floor of the sea. It is because there are a thousand mysteries down there none of us shall ever solve. What would interest you most to see in the world?"

"Why, I'd like to take a peek at all the battle-fields first; and then, after that, I shouldn't mind going back to Babylon and digging for Shalmaneser's bat-bag."

"You might at least learn something," said old grumpy.

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"No doubt he would, Arthur. You mustn't forget that once you were his age."

"Yes, yes, Henrik; but long before his age I was always about with my hammer."

"And, believe me, that little hammer don't seem to be among the missing," said William, mildly. "You've had it out for me ever since we came on board."

The two old fellows looked at him rather blankly. They did not understand; so William went into details, and to these details he added some other interesting items.

"I was a newsboy once. I slept in areaways, fought and scrapped for my pennies. Don't you think it's a pretty good sign that I'm taking this trip around the world? How should I know who this guy Shalmaneser was? I never went to school after I was nine. You look on me as a blamed idiot. Well, maybe I am. But did it ever occur to you that the men who built this old gondola, plate by plate, rivet by rivet, didn't know any more about Shalmaneser than Kelly's goat? My interest is in live things, yours in dead. Yet my work is of more use to human beings than yours is."

"Indeed! And what is your work?" snapped Greenwood, not particularly relishing William's directness.

"I'm a plumber."

"I judged it might be something on that order."

"Is—that—so? Ye-ah; I'm a plumber. I help keep out dirt and disease; I put in bath-

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tubs, lay water-mains, sewers, and do the job well. Did you ever stop to think, when you turned a tap on at the top of the forty-story building, that it was a nifty bit of work to get it up there? What's the Himalayas to that?" Inwardly William added, "Now, back away from that, old stick-in-the-mud!"

Old stick-in-the-mud said never a word, but his companion spoke up.

"Young man, thanks for the rebuke. Each man has his niche, his work. And what matters so long as he does it well? Don't you say so, Arthur?"

"Well, yes, Henrik. Perhaps I'm a bit impatient at times. And maybe I judged Mr. Grogan as an idle young man. Suppose we call a truce and try to understand each other better?"

"Sure," agreed William, rather proud of having tamed the old fire-eater.

After a little silence, Clausen spoke up, a thrill in his voice.

"There's Africa, Arthur!"

"Where?" cried William. Africa, *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, and *Allan Quartermain*! What was more natural than that he should conjure up these mythical tales, which was all the history of Africa he knew anything about? "Where is it?"

"See that dun-colored cloud? Well, that's the foreland."

"Say, I'd like to see Africa the way you two have. Ever read *King Solomon's Mines*?" William asked, shyly.

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"Oh yes. A mighty readable fairy-story."

"Well, say! Next thing you'll be telling me you've read *Old Sleuth*."

Old stick-in-the-mud chuckled. "Well, maybe I have."

"Good Lord! Now I know you're human."

Laughter has dissolved more enmities, dissipated more gloom, welded more friendships than all your philosophies bunched together. And when this odd trio caught their breaths, they were friends.

Immediately one began to talk about Africa, about deserts and sand-buried cities, the wonders of antiquity, adventure upon adventure, quite as remarkable as anything William had ever read.

The first bugle for luncheon took him to the port side again. He had forgotten all about Gibraltar!

"Amiable Irishman, Arthur."

"Yes, he is, Henrik. And I rather liked the way he brought about that bit relative to the water-pipes."

"Aren't they a wonderful people? Did we ever go anywhere without finding one of them building something—railroads, bridges, canals, harbors; working and fighting and letting the other man carry off the money and the glory? It's the game, Arthur; you and I know. It isn't Mr. Grogan's lack of education that irritates you; it's his youth and all the game that's before him."

"Perhaps that is it."

From the jetty tender to the old gun-galleries

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and back again, from this crooked street to that, past old landmarks bristling with deeds of valor, William and his school-teacher wandered. After coming down from the echoing-galleries the two had drifted away from the others and gone investigating on their own account. It was impossible for her not to catch some of his enthusiasm for everything, the motley, picturesque Africans, the Tommies in their smart jackets, the swart, stocky Spaniards, the donkeys plodding across the neutral ground into Spain, the gray monsters in the harbor, the real Rock which appeared so peaceful and yet which they knew to be so sinisterly alive.

Frequently she heard him murmur, and perhaps he was quite unconscious that he spoke aloud: "And there is Gibraltar, and here is little old Willie Grogan!" She understood. A dream, which once had been numbered among the impossible things, had come true. And when he found the grave in the military cemetery—the grave of a granduncle of his father's—he held his chin higher and carried his shoulders a bit stiffer thereafter. He had now a proprietary interest in the Rock—blood of his blood had soaked the sparse soil of it.

No pride like that which William innocently took in this discovery is ever harmful. On the contrary, it is one of those sublime emotional tonics which revivifies manhood, renews the iron in the corpuscle, and puts the conscience in order.

She had some difficulty in preventing him from squandering his money upon useless gimcracks; but in spite of her vigilance he succeeded in buying

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several strings of coral beads (made of some kind of gum) and a spangled shawl he intended to take back to the Widow Hanlon, his landlady. He was soon to learn that he was entering a world of shopkeepers whose knowledge of truth was based upon hearsay only.

When they returned to the ship she was tired and happy and he was only happy. He grumbled a little because he could not wander through the town at night.

Camden, whom they had both forgotten, was leaning over the rail as the tender drew alongside. He soon picked out William, quite as easily as he would have picked out a poppy in a wheat-field. He watched the two thoughtfully. He saw William catch her by the arm and swing her to the platform of the ladder. It was one of those feats of strength that are not impressive because accomplished without apparent effort.

"Gad! the man is a Hercules! I'd like to see him in a real fight, a rough-and-tumble where his life depended upon it. I'd give a year of my life to witness something like that."

When William dressed for dinner that night he had the cabin to himself. He studied his face in the little mirror. To him that face appeared utterly hopeless. Red hair which wouldn't stay put unless he plastered it down, ears like pie-plant leaves, skin like a German trout's, neck like a stevedore's. . . . What was the use? He would always be a plumber. What woman would think of marrying a yap with a phiz like his? Even the

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bellhops could see through the disguise; the dress-suit didn't hide anything.

So here we arrive at last, without further dilly-dallying. William was in love. The fact that until now his looks had never worried him deeply was sufficient proof of the state of his mind. The moment a man wants to be handsome he is riding for his fall. No man cares a rap for mere beauty among his kind; he wants nothing more than strength or cleverness. But let him think woman, and at once he desires the beauty of Antinous, the strength of Hercules, and the wisdom of Nestor. You will no doubt carefully note that Antinous is given the precedence. It is not that man wishes to shed these illustrious qualities upon woman; it is wholly selfish; he merely wants to be well supplied with bait.

I often wonder what Nature was about when she gave all the gorgeous feathers to the male birds and so few to the female. Certainly she did not follow out this idea when she modeled the human race.

William's school-teacher, however, did not think him ugly. To her he was only rugged and clean and kindly and amusing. She thought his eyes beautiful. His pug-nose, his generous mouth, even his freckles, all seemed to move with but one object, with but one purpose, to accentuate the beauty and expression of his eyes. I might go on and say that she was falling in love with him, but I should have to deny it later. She had her dreams even as he had his, but William Grogan had no place in them.

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Well, toward such a reef the guileless William was steering his argosy of love.

Late that night, when the upper deck was deserted, the girl stole out of her cabin and walked for a mile or more around the deck-houses. The sea was calm; there was not the slightest roll to the ship. Far away to starboard she saw the sail of a felucca as it tacked into the moonlight. She paused at the rail and watched it until it vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Presently she looked up toward the brilliant moon and began to pray.

Why do prayers seem ineffectual unless uttered aloud? Is it because in silent prayer evil is still a force, strong enough to break the thread, and we need the sound of our voice to give us confidence and fervor?

"Dear God, make me strong. Take out of my heart the evil longings. Give me strength always to be good. Let me not covet that which is not mine. Clean my heart and put temptation behind me. Amen!"

She bent her head to the rail.

William Grogan, standing behind a ventilator, a perfectly innocent eavesdropper, never forgot that simple prayer. He took off his cap reverently and tiptoed away. But he carried with him the truth; the thunderclap rang in his ears. He loved this school-teacher of his with all the ardor of his Irish soul.

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAM had picked up his odds and ends of life in the streets, and these, as I have already observed, had formed the basis of a cynical philosophy. But to offset this he possessed an imagination as boundless and irresponsible as the perspectives of a Chinese painter. He knew nearly all there was to know about mankind, and enough of woman to be on his guard; but he was always soaring to heaven and tumbling back to earth, and so his philosophy was less a staff to lean on than an air-cushion for his frequent bumps.

When he reached the forward rail, under the bridge, he stopped. His mind was awlirl. The two episodes, the prayer and the kindling of his heart, had shaken him profoundly. How he wanted her! How every drop of blood in his body leaped at the thought of her! And yet there was lacking that burning primordial desire to break down all barriers, brush aside all obstacles, crush anything that stood between him and this woman. Why? He saw clearly the immeasurable gulf. He knew that in these days men did not take their women under their arm and run away with them. He was like that lantern up there at the mast-head; and she was like one of those stars beyond.

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There was no earthly way of bridging such a gulf.

Evil and temptation; the words recurred to him. What had she done? From what had she fled? Who and what was she, after all? That for three years she had been a school-teacher was an established fact. But before that? Was there a husband in the coil somewhere? Evil and temptation.

A fine future for him; and that dream of his about a home of his own, a garden to play in, a wife and a couple of kids, was dissipating like that streamer of fog off the port bow.

Up from under these bitter thoughts came the old superstition. He found that he still adhered to the belief that his presence on board here was a calculated move in the checker-game of fate. Some day she might need him, and when that day came William Grogan would not be found wanting.

Far up in the crow's-nest he saw the dim outline of the lookout. He heard the "All's well!" It startled him. Then his back stiffened. Who could say? That might be a message to him as well as to the man at the wheel above. . . . Aw, was he going to let those pipe-dreams of his carry him up again, only to slam him down? Not all his philosophy, such as it was, nor the recollection of his buffets and how he had taken them up-standing, nor the knowledge that financially he need no longer worry, sufficed to ease a corner of this dull weight of misery. He had fallen in love with a woman who was not his kind.

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She was good, anyhow. No woman could pray like that and not be good. It was just a simple prayer of a soul in trouble. His clean heart and his cynical knowledge fought over this conclusion. It is impossible for a man to let sordidness touch the skirts of the woman he loves. He must idealize her and put her on a pedestal, for man cannot worship anything not above his own level. It is a healthy sign for all that the world is full of wobbly pedestals. It is a phase of that indefinable longing to find something by which to pull ourselves upward. In other words, we still make little gods of our own.

"I'm a poor simp," he murmured, looking up at the moon and finding it far over the other side of the ship. He pulled out his watch—the old fat silver timepiece which had been his father's. Half after two!

He remembered reading somewhere about the glamour of love. There was nothing to it; it was all doubt and then some more doubt. He was very unhappy. In this love-game he had no assets, only liabilities.

It was time for bed. As he entered the port companionway she came into the starboard, and they met on the first landing.

"Why!" she exclaimed, startled at the sight of him.

"I couldn't sleep, somehow," he said.

"Nor could I."

"I guess we overdid a little in Gibraltar," he suggested.

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"I never thought of that," she replied, listlessly. Together they went down to the main deck. Their cabins were on opposite sides of the ship.

"Good night, Mr. Grogan," she said as she turned into her corridor.

We are eternally diving into the crowds for our Bayards, our Jeanne d'Arcs, and all the while our elbows are rubbing theirs.

"Good night."

As he repeated this empty phrase he pondered over the lack of desire on his part to sweep her up into his arms. Where was that fire he had so often read about? One thing was certain: as he lifted himself into his berth he vowed never again to read a novel with a woman in it.

He rose the next morning in time to reach the dining-room before the doors closed. He was very much astonished to find that his appetite was as normal as ever. Nothing seemed to work out according to schedule. All the people he had ever heard speak on the subject adhered to the supposition that when a person was in love that person lost his or her appetite. At the old boarding-house this was one of the set table jests. "You're not eating anything to-night, Mr. Haberdasher. In love?" How they all would "guy" the object of this solicitude!

Very remote that boarding-house seemed just now, with its shop-girls and warehouse-clerks and their sensible views of life, their dogged pluck, their amazing economies. To address one as "Mister" or "Miss" was considered to be the

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last word in irony. Petty squabbles were frequent enough; but let one of them get into financial difficulties, and every poor, slim purse came forth. Could he ever go back there? He doubted it. Somehow his horizon had broadened mysteriously. He had stepped out of the humdrum, and he knew that only a reverse in fortune could force him back to it. It was in no sense snobbery. It was simply that these old acquaintances had dropped out of his orbit, or, to be exact, he had been switched into a new one and had not quite steadied himself to the speed of it.

He went to his chair, hoping to find her and yet relieved when he found her not. He was curious to learn how the sight of her would affect him in the daylight, now that he was assured that he loved her, but there was a generous portion of dread mixed with this curiosity. She was up and about somewhere, for some new books lay on her steamer rug. Baedekers; he knew that flaming red cover tolerably well by now.

To take a book from the chair of a friend during that friend's temporary absence could in no wise be looked upon as an indiscretion. William went over to the girl's chair and picked up the three volumes: *Southern Italy*, *Central Italy*, and *Northern Italy*. Idly he turned the cover of one book. On the fly-leaf he discovered a bit of writing—"Ruth Warren, her book." The two other volumes contained this name also. The signatures had been written quite recently, probably that very morning. No doubt this was her real name.

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The purser had these books for sale. It would be a simple matter to make an inquiry.

Yes, Miss Jones had bought three guide-books that morning.

"Anything turned up about that wallet of mine?"

"No, Mr. Grogan. That has turned out to be something of a mystery. No one has reported having found it."

"Well, I haven't lost any sleep over it," said William.

"Ruth Warren." When she had written that in those books she had forgotten; either that or she no longer cared. And if she didn't care, the past could not be very dark. He caught himself up sharply. Always ready to go soaring, always ready to make excuses. She had written her true name in an unguarded moment.

As a detective William might have made a passable success. If his logical deductions weren't up to the approved mark, he sometimes made shrewd guesses. If she had told the truth about her father being a professor and a man of science, it would not be difficult to prove it. So he proceeded to hunt up one of his ancients, whom he found in the smoke-room, deep in one of George Eber's Egyptian tales.

"Good morning, Mr. Greenwood," said William, sitting down beside the old man.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Grogan." The archeologist pushed aside his Tauchnitz reluctantly.

"Say, I was wondering if you could answer a

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question of mine. You know all about these scientific guys. Did you ever hear of a professor named Warren?"

"Warren?" ruminatively. "Why, yes. Professor Warren wrote a capital book on gravities."

"Is he alive?"

"No; I believe he has been dead some years. If I'm not mistaken you'll find his book in the ship's library. It contains a good deal of nautical information."

"Thanks. I'll see if I can get it."

"It is rather dry," the old man warned.

"That won't matter. I'm curious to learn what keeps my feet on deck when I ought to be standing on my head."

"You are a very amusing young man, Mr. Grogan."

"I know it. I ought to be in the two-a-day vaudeville."

He found the book. It was dry, dry as anything William had ever picked up in the form of books. It was a combination of chemistry, geology, and arithmetic. A casual glance was enough. He sat down in his chair and patiently waited for the girl to appear. It was a mean kind of trap; and under ordinary circumstances he would not have stooped to it. But how in the world could he protect her if he did not know what menaced her?

She arrived at the moment the steward was serving the broth. She smiled brightly, dropped the Baedekers to the deck, plumped into her chair,

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and drank her broth greedily. She did not look like a person who had spent most of the night on deck.

The daughter of a scholar, herself well educated, well bred, beautiful; what chance had William Grogan, of Burns, Dolan & Co., estimable plumbers though they were? No chance whatever. So he bravely laid away his love in lavender. But there was no barrier to friendship. He might salvage that prize out of the wreck of his dreams.

"What are you reading this morning?" she inquired.

"Something five thousand miles over my head." He held out the book.

Instantly her expression changed. "Where did you get this?" she cried, seizing the book.

"In the library." William found his embarrassment of sizable dimensions. Spiritually he writhed.

She hugged the book to her heart suddenly, and her eyes sparkled with tears. "My poor, unhappy father! Mr. Grogan, this is no accident. How did you find it?"

"I'm a mean dog, I suppose. Well, I saw you that day at Cook's. I didn't think much of it at the time. But when you turned out to be the school-teacher around the corner, why, that was different. I just couldn't help being interested. You see, for three years you were a friend of mine, though you didn't know it, and I was kind of watching over you. So long as you never slowed up going by that window, I thought everything

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was all right with you. When I found that you were my school-teacher, I made up my mind that you had run away from something or somebody. The way you said your name was Jones kind of warned me that it wasn't Jones. But, of course, I couldn't ask any questions."

He paused, rather hoping that she would help him out. But she only hugged the book closer, and the fixity of her gaze troubled him so strongly that he let his wander toward the sea.

"I don't meddle with other people's business," he struggled on; "I'm not that kind of a guy. It's only because I want to be a real friend, somebody you can rely on and come to when you're in trouble. It isn't as if I'd just met you. Of course, you don't know anything about me but what I've told you; but I did seem to know you. Your little brown shoes going by my window, one-two-three, like that, caught me. I built up all sorts of stories about you. Reading too much, probably. Anyhow, there you were, every day, rain or shine, except Saturdays and Sundays. I'm a lonesome dub myself. I've had to fight all along the way; and I guess my middle name is Trouble. When I don't hunt for it, they bring it to me on a platter."

"What is it you think I have done?" she asked, quietly.

"Honest, I don't know what I thought. Anyhow, I wasn't thinking of asking any questions. This morning I picked up one of those Baedekers, and I accidentally saw the name on the fly-leaf.

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I wasn't sure; so I asked one of my ancients if he had ever heard of a Professor Warren. He had. Now, Miss Warren, you don't have to tell William Grogan anything. It isn't because I was just curious. That wasn't it at all. But I thought if I was really your friend I might help you—that is, if you were in any kind of trouble where a friend could help." He spoke depreciatingly, but there was a fine light in his eyes. "I take it that you're all alone, like I am. If you'd had a brother or a family, why, I'd 've shied off."

The girl's heart grew suddenly and gratefully warm. Until this moment she had not believed that such a man existed outside of one's fancy. It was so easy and simple for man to pass on, eying askance all burdens save his own and seldom offering to give others a lift unless impelled by self-interest. His face no longer provoked her sense of the comic; some light, very fine and lofty, seemed to shine through it. The tears which had hung desperately to her eyelids, lost hold, tumbled and plashed upon the book and the hands which clasped it.

"I want you for my friend, Mr. Grogan. I can't say very much. I'm a little choked up just now. My father! And this book was his life, a part of the thing he strove so valiantly to attain. Half the time he never realized that I was living in the same house with him. So there are still some men of intellect who remember what he did? Thank you for letting me know that."

"Then you're going to let me be a real friend,

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a sort of Brother Bill kind?" William's voice shook.

"Yes. . . . Brother Bill!" She smiled through her tears

"The kind you can come to if ever you happen to be in trouble?" He was rather insistent about this article in the compact.

"Yes." She gave him her hand warmly and firmly, and after that the world did not seem so dark to William.

"I wonder," he said, when the tingle of the hand-clasp died away—"I wonder if I'm superstitious? I don't know. But somehow I feel I didn't pick out this old gondola for nothing. Somebody has appointed me your guardian. But you've got to promise that when you need me you'll call me."

"I promise. If ever I need a man, strong and honest, between me and this something you hint of, I'll call to you."

She recollected this promise one dreadful night in the purlieus of Malay Street in far-away Singapore.

CHAPTER IX

IT was rather remarkable that William should recognize the futility of his love the moment it came into the range of his understanding. The true lover immediately sees all his defects, more or less colossal; his conceit and complacency collapse, and he never recovers them in the same proportions. William took no inventory; it was not at all necessary. It was not that he was merely homely; there was his lack of education, his lack of breeding. To a girl like Ruth Warren, physical attractions were only small change; any man to be successful with her had to have breeding and education; if he possessed physical beauty, he was only so much luckier. William was strong in moral fiber; abnegation is not an inherent quality in weak men. So he did not go mooning about, cursing the day he was born and questioning the stars at night.

The girl was serenely unconscious of this state of affairs. She saw the same class distinctions that he saw. She did not even think of him in the light of a candidate. From the other approach, however, that of friendship, she met him more than half-way. She could not remember having a sincerer liking for a man.

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Above all things she needed the comradeship of a cheerful person; and William Grogan was that. That the Spartan fox was gnawing at his vitals as he laughed and jested would have appealed to her as impossible.

Beyond the fact that she was Professor Warren's daughter he made not the least effort to penetrate. This was because he possessed, without knowing it for what it was, an innate chivalry. Her secrets were her own; and if the day should come when she felt the need of taking him into her full confidence, why, he would be ready to accept it, to give what advice he could.

She did not make friends readily, and he rather regretted this. She had the disconcerting habit of letting the other person carry on the conversation until it died a natural death. The women were beginning to leave her alone, and that was a bad sign. It was William's opinion that she ought to make acquaintances port and starboard. Six months amounted to a great many days; and those whom she had politely snubbed would not forget it, happen she had need of them some day. He was frank enough to put this opinion into words. And he was both surprised and gratified when she said humbly that from now on she would snub no one.

Of Camden they now saw but little; and neither missed him. He was carrying on a mild flirtation with a young woman who had social ambitions; and to her Camden seemed to be the only eligible man on board.

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It was the second Sunday of the voyage, half after ten in the morning. William came around to his chair and dropped into it with a sigh of contentment.

"Church over?" Ruth asked, closing her book.

"No. But I was getting fidgety, and sloped. They told me there's several hundred millions of heathen to convert. Confronted by such a hopeless job, I gave up my pew."

She laughed. "You shouldn't make fun of the missionaries," she reproved.

"I know it. But several hundred millions! And he shook his finger at me, too. Well, maybe I am a heathen. I don't go to church; I can't sit still long enough. But if you want my idea of Christianity, give me the Salvation Army. I'm not joking. You don't hear much about them. They toot cornets and bang bass-drums on the corner, and it makes you grin; but for doing downright good they've got all the missionaries buffaloed. Take it from me; I know. They don't go around trying to convert Rockerbilt into giving a memorial window to the Cathedral of Everlasting Lugs—nope. They go to the back door and ask for old clothes, cast-off shoes, and magazines. Then they go out after the poor souses, the homeless devils, the good-for-naughts, the girls of the street, the drunkard's wife, and the like. Do they preach sermons about the poor heathen? Nix. They pass around hot soup, old coats and shoes, and throw in a cot for the night if you don't happen to have one. That kind of makes the poor devils believe there is

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a God. But if you make a Christian out of a happy Hottentot, you usually have to stand over him with a club. Say," with sudden eagerness, "the bulletin says we reach Naples Tuesday morning around ten o'clock."

"Glorious! Sorrento, the Blue Grotto, Pompeii! Isn't it wonderful?"

"It sure is, sister."

"But I don't think you're very pious."

"Maybe not. Stained glass, pipe-organs, and white neckties never gave me a shiver yet. I poke fun at 'em sometimes, if that's what you mean. Aw, the whole thing is twisted up, somehow. They've all got the right idea, but everybody wants to do the leading; nobody wants to be led. I'm for the Salvationists."

"Do you like music?" she asked, presently.

"Like it? Why, you can get me away from my meat with a piece of paper and a hair-comb. When I was a kid I got lost twice in New York, following the German bands."

"What kind of music do you like?"

"All kinds, if it's good, barring the cornet-player and the Swiss bell-ringers. I don't know anything about music, but I know that it gets me deep. There used to be an old chap at my boarding-house who could play the violin, believe me. He'd put me to sleep, kind of, with old-home stuff, and then yank up the hair on the back of my neck with some of that dago-Dutch music. Couldn't tell you why I liked it, but it always got me."

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"I believe church is over." She got up.
"Would you like to hear me play the piano?"

"You can play? Well, say!"

"Come along, then. There is a piano in the alcove over the dining-saloon; and if there's no one around I'll play for you. The truth is, I've been hungering to touch that piano."

They succeeded in getting into the alcove without attracting attention; and shortly after William sat back in his chair, feeling that his soul had been plucked out of him and cast among the clouds. She played lightly and dreamily at first; half the time the music was but a low ripple of murmurous sounds. Bach, Grieg, Beethoven, Rubinstein, Chopin; it is doubtful if at that time William had ever heard of them; but, strangers though they were, they knew how to play with his temperamental soul. He was really fond of good music; he had heard just enough of it in the past to whet his taste for it; and what he heard this morning set his desires in full cry. What he could not understand was that she could play all these wonderful compositions without notes.

They both awoke suddenly and embarrassedly to the realization that they had an unsuspected audience. The two balcony-corridors were filled with delighted auditors. A muffled round of applause greeted the performer as she rounded out the brilliant finale of Chopin's Fourth Ballade. She had forgotten herself; her skill and ardor had smothered her caution.

"We're in for it now!" whispered William, with

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a grin. "There's the entertainment committee edging through the bunch."

Several young women had constituted themselves a committee on entertainments. They had not been elected by popular vote; they had simply agreed to be the committee. At once they arranged a series of card-parties, candy auctions, charades, dances, and musicales. They also passed the hat for the sailors' fund, the stokers' fund, some orphans in the steerage, the band, the heathen, and back to the sailors' fund again. A good deal of tobacco was incinerated in the smoke-room on nights given over to these festivities. In the eye of the committee this young musician was a veritable find.

"Oh, Miss Jones, won't you play at our concert Monday night? Please!"

"I'll be glad to," said Ruth, without the slightest hesitance. The initial embarrassment was gone; nor did she accept the invitation as one conferring a favor. She rose from the stool and left the alcove, smiling.

William pressed after her, self-conscious but exhilarated. He was very proud of her, and what vanity he had was expanding. She had played just to please him. Suddenly the slump came. What had he to offer a woman like this? Nothing, absolutely nothing—that is, if you discounted his willingness to give his heart's blood.

Camden, from the rear of the crowd, nodded his head approvingly.

"That young woman has manner," he declared.

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"She isn't flustered and doesn't pretend to be, which is better still. And, by George, she can play!"

"You seem very much interested all of a sudden," said the flirt at his elbow. "She is probably some musician returning to her studies."

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Camden; and then, with a smile palpably seasoned with malice: "She has grace and beauty too."

His neighbor frowned. She had no liking for the trend of conversation. On his part he was quite indifferent; she had served his turn.

"But what in the world does she see in that Irishman?"

"He probably amuses her, as he does us. She is an unusual person. Just as everything threatened to sink into the doldrums, she startles us all by proving herself to be a fine musician. Next thing we'll hear she's the daughter of some multi-millionaire. If I were going all the way around I'd cultivate her. A woman, to play like that, must in her gentler moods be charming."

Later Camden went in search of William and found him among the giant cables in the bow.

"Hello!" he hailed. "What are you doing up here among the paint-pots and old iron?"

"Trying to hurry the boat along," said William, without appreciable cordiality.

He did not care to talk to any one. He had chosen this isolated spot because he was superlatively unhappy. His desire had been to crawl away somewhere (like a dumb animal that's been

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hurt) where he could sigh without half the ship turning around to see what the trouble was. So Camden was not welcome.

"I suppose you'll be leaving us Tuesday."

"That depends upon what news awaits me in Naples," was Camden's reply. "I may wind up in Hong-Kong. My work is full of big jumps. I never know from one day to another where I'm due to land next." Camden laughed. This statement was so frankly true that its appeal to his risibles was too strong to overcome. "As for inclination, I'd like to start back to New York at once."

"Uh-huh. What's this noise about the old burg, anyhow? We're always wanting to get back to it. I was kind of homesick not more than five minutes gone."

"It's because any town we grow up in becomes a part of us; and so when we go away from it we're being amputated after a fashion. Why didn't you tell me Miss Jones played the piano like that?"

"Did we ever talk music?" countered William, evasively.

"Not that I recollect. But she has genius; and such a gift doesn't belong to her alone. A school-teacher? She ought to be performing on the concert stage, making ten or fifteen thousand the year."

"As much as all that?" William was astonished. "That's tough luck. She can't face a real audience. Something the matter with her nerves. She told me she had tried and tried, and failed."

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She didn't know a crowd had collected until she was through."

"But she promised to play at the concert to-morrow night. I heard her."

"Ye-ah; but no bread and butter depends on to-morrow night."

"Ah, I understand. That's very unfortunate."

"Oh, I don't know. I guess she prefers to belong to herself."

"Well, it was a treat to hear her." Camden lighted a cigarette and stared ahead reflectively.

"Hong-Kong?" thought William. What kind of a job did this man work at that took him from one end of the world to the other at a moment's notice? William still doddered; did he like or dislike Camden? Twelve days had passed since the first friction, and yet he could not decide. Never before had he met a man he could neither like nor dislike, and it bothered him. He was honest enough to admit that he wanted to dislike Camden, but could not find any justifiable reasons.

Two or three times he had essayed to broach the subject to his school-teacher, to ascertain her opinion of the man, but something had always intervened. Camden had not made the slightest attempt to flirt with her, and he had proved elsewhere that he was not above such pastime. Up to the present time his manner had been irreproachable. William put aside these thoughts abruptly. He wasn't getting anywhere. And in a day or so his path and Camden's would deviate indefinitely.

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Have you ever seen the Bay of Naples late in the summer, before the snow-breathing winds come down from the Apennines to clarify the air? I know; doubtless you have sailed over it in autumn and winter and spring, but there is something for you still to see. The whole lovely panorama is like a mirage. If there is any poetry in your nature, this unforgettable picture is going to bring it out to you forthwith, for better or for worse.

Remember the pink stucco of the terraced city, the superlative blue of the water, the dazzling sunshine, the grim, gray ash-heap men call Vesuvius, the pink villages dotting the circular shore to the tip of the Sorrentine peninsula, the amethyst isles?—nothing seems real until you become part of it. The city is an enchanting illusion until your foot touches it, the sea until you dip your fingers into it.

William could not write poetry, not even the popular-song sort, but he often thought in Homeric verse. All in the forty-odd minutes it takes to enter the bay and glide into the haven inside the breakwater he was in rotation a Roman centurion, a gladiator in Pompeii, a Saracen gathering loot, a galley-salve (breaking his chains and killing the brutal overseer), a Christian martyr vanquishing the lions, and a soldier of Garibaldi—all fighters, every blessed one of them.

Mr. Cook, mindful of his commissions, spread the little army among the lesser first-class hotels such as were open at this time of the year. As usual in such arrangements there was a good deal

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of confusion and friends were separated. The two archeologists, Ruth and the two spinsters who shared her cabin on board the *Ajax*, and Camden were assigned to the Bristol, while William, much to his indignation, found himself domiciled at the Parker, farther down the Corso Vittorio.

For the next four days William had not time to devote to idle retrospection; Mr. Cook's agents took care of that. They saw Vesuvius, Pompeii, Sorrento, Amalfi, Capri and the Blue Grotto, Naples (north, east, south, and west), and visited the baths at Baia. William was tireless, indefatigable. Many pilgrims fell by the wayside, gasping, and some refused to go farther; but not so William, who was out to see everything, whether he was going to enjoy it or not.

The army was divided into brigades. The guide who had charge of William's brigade cursed the day he was born. He begged, cajoled, pleaded; in vain; William was relentless. Not the smallest tomb escaped him; he absorbed information at every pore; he fairly drank that guide until he rattled like an empty canteen.

Then came Sunday, and William rested half the day. He summed up his four days' tripping as follows: ten thousand ruins, ten thousand marble statues, ten thousand pieces of bronze, ten thousand cabmen, and twice that number of beggars.

In the afternoon he and Ruth set out to visit William's old friend Tommaso Malfi. They found him on a little farm at the foot of Vesuvius. Tommaso was delighted. He called to his wife

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frantically. He yelled for little Tony. The three of them executed a tarantella about the embarrassed William. Ruth saw that there was something more than simple cordiality in this effusive welcome.

"Ah, mees, you don' know thees Irisher. But for heem I have no leetle Tony. *Si.*"

"Aw, forget it, Tommy," said William, blushing to his ears. There had been no ulterior purpose in his bringing Ruth to this little farm-house surrounded by fields of artichokes.

"*Si, si!* I know you, Irisher. See, mees. He beat the Black Han' an' take thees Tony boy away from them an' save me all the money I have in dees worl'. An' now he say, 'Forget eet!' But I don't forget. Oh, the poleece could do nothing. But thees big red-head he go right into them Black Han's an' beat them up weeth hees fists. Soch a fight! Three to one. Bam, bam, bam! Good-night, good-by; an' eet is done! Like that! An' he say, 'Forget eet!' *Va via!* You mek me laugh. . . . Maria!" he shrieked! "the chairs, the wine, the cheese, the ripe olives, an' the pickled artichokes! *Presto!*"

"And so I find you a hero," said Ruth, on the way back through the pale sapphire twilight.

"Why, I didn't do anything but punch a couple of frightened wops."

"But Tommaso's wife said that they were armed and you were not."

"And if I'd 've known that I wouldn't have butted in, believe me! But, say, that Tony boy

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was a peach those days—red cheeks, black eyes, and all that. A great kid.”

“Are you afraid of me?” she asked.

He thought for a while. “Well, sometimes.”

“A brother should never be afraid of his sister.”

“I know it. But there’s something in your eyes, once in a while, that makes me feel like beetles with pins in ’em.”

“You are a brave man. Tell me the whole story. I like stories where men do unselfish things.”

“I guess Tommy told all there was to tell. I walloped the three leaders, and after that there was no more Black Hand around our neighborhood. They’re up in Sing Sing. Scum! Think of it; squeezing the hearts of mothers! Aw, it would make any white man fighting mad. And say, maybe that scrap wasn’t fun! Did you ever get so mad that it made you happy? Well, that was me.”

A curious wish rushed into the girl’s heart. To see him in action, fighting with his bare fists against odds! It was an idle, purposeless wish, and she was almost instantly ashamed of it. Indeed, she searched in vain for the cause. She detested brutality. She was always rather severe with the pugnacious pupils at school. It was perfectly human that young boys should fight among themselves; nevertheless, she did what she could to prevent these miniature wars. And here she was wishing to see this Hercules of the water-pipes in a fight against odds. The puzzle of it was

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still shifting about in her mind as the carriage stopped in front of the Bristol.

There was to be a band concert down in the Villa Nazionale that night. William ate his dinner impatiently and hurried back to the Bristol, at that moment the center of the universe. He had to wait. So he went into the little writing-room and tried to read the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*. As he flung it aside he chanced to look down into the waste-basket at the side of the desk. He saw scattered bits of a photograph. Rather odd, he thought. Forgetting that the contents of a waste-basket even in a public writing-room is inviolable, he reached down and picked up a piece of the photograph. Then he recalled that the world had gone crazy over picture-puzzles two or three years before. Here was an opportunity to amuse himself until Ruth appeared.

It required less than five minutes to put the pieces together. He was dumfounded at the result. For the face of the woman he loved smiled up at him wistfully. Painstakingly he turned the bits over, in case there should be writing on the back. There was. In a masculine scrawl was written: "This is the girl."

CHAPTER X

WILLIAM stared down at the writing while a dozen conflicting emotions possessed him. Ruth Warren's photograph, torn into fragments and thrown carelessly into a waste-basket, here in Naples, thousands of miles from home. "This is the girl." A sinister phrase.

All the little puzzling angles in her attitude came back with a rush, each clearly defined; her evident alarm over his discovery that she was a school-teacher, the somberness of her gaze toward the sea, her aloofness, her prayer, her lack of interest in the mail department at Cook's. His heart was swept by savage anger, only to give way to great tenderness. She was all alone. She *had* run away, and it was now patent that she was being pursued. By whom and for what? Was it the contents of the chamois bag? He swore under his breath. He did not care who she was or what she had done; she was the woman he loved.

William was Irish; but on the other hand he possessed Teutonic doggedness in pursuing an object, in adhering to a plan of action. Come ill, then, come good, always, had she need of him, would she find him.

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Further cogitation was denied him. The girl herself appeared on the threshold.

"Ready!"

"All right," he replied, catching his breath. There was something approaching happiness in her face to-night. He scooped up the bits of cardboard and nonchalantly dropped them into his side pocket. If she noticed the act she gave no sign.

After the concert was over they stopped at a *trattoria* for something cooling to drink. Over huge lemonades, which no amount of Belgian sugar seemed able to sweeten, they disoused the music.

"Some band," he agreed.

"Nearly all military bands are good. And now, Brother William, what's the matter?"

"Matter?"

"Yes. You've been absent-minded all the evening. You are worrying about something."

"Maybe I did a fool thing yesterday," he said, evasively. "I got tired of running into Cook's every morning for cigar money, so I got fifteen hundred lire. And now I don't know what to do with it. Camden told me that the town is alive with sneak-thieves, and that it isn't safe to wander about at night by your lonesome."

"That was foolish. Do you want me to carry the money for you? . . . Heavens! don't take it out here," she cried. "Wait until we get into the carriage."

"Maybe that wasn't all that was worrying me." William was not an adept at dissimulation. He

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dipped his hand into his pocket and laid the fragments of the photograph on the marble-topped table. "I found these pieces in the waste-basket at the Bristol." He began arranging the pieces as he talked. "Didn't know what it was at first. I was waiting for you, and I put 'em together like one of those old picture-puzzles. Remember 'em? Well, I got some little old jolt, believe me. Can you step around to this side?"

Curiously she rose and came to his side, looking down over his shoulder.

"Where did you get that?" she asked, in a low, tense voice.

"I told you; in the waste-basket. I was dead sure you hadn't thrown it there. And you didn't tear it up?"

"No." Her hand slid from his shoulder.

"Thought not. There's something on the back." Carefully he reversed the pieces. "See? Will you tell Brother Bill if there's anything serious?"

She leaned down and scrutinized the writing. What color there was in her cheeks slowly faded and her eyes became dull. "I don't understand," she said.

"Well, the way I take it, some one is looking for you. Remember, I said I'd never ask you any questions, but that if you ever needed me you'd call me."

"I haven't forgotten," listlessly.

"Do you want this?"

"No. Throw it away." Her gesture was like a shudder

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"I'll keep it."

"I'd rather you threw it away, in the street."

"And I'd rather keep it. I'll tell you what. I'll trade it for a fresh one," with a boldness he had not thought himself capable of.

"I haven't any. That was one of the few I ever possessed. And it would please me if you threw it away. Some day I'll tell you why."

"All right, sister. I thought maybe you wouldn't mind if I kept it."

"I would mind very much. Perhaps in Florence or Venice I'll have another taken; and to one of those you'll be welcome. But not that. Would you mind if we returned at once? I am very tired."

William was careful to pick out a carriage with a taximeter. Neither of them spoke until they reached the Corso. He gave her a bundle of bank-notes.

"Oh yes; I had forgotten. You must be very careful of your money. Never carry a large sum about. Never keep your letter of credit with the little pink book of identification."

"I'm getting wise. I keep 'em separated these days. I wish we were at the same hotel. I'd like to know about that photograph. I mean," he added, hastily, "I'd like to see the guy who tore it up. You see, I kick on anybody tearing up something that was yours. You understand, don't you?"

"I believe I do." Some impulse impelled her to add: "Don't put me on a pedestal. I'm just an

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ordinary human being. To-night, for the first time in weeks, I was almost happy. The fine music, the beauty of the night. . . . Well, that photograph has spoiled it all. Throw it away, please."

Piece by piece it fluttered into the night. At first it hurt him; then he saw it from a different and less romantic angle. It had been touched by other hands, men's hands. He was rather relieved to see the last piece skim the parapet.

He bade her good night at the door of the hotel and dismissed the carriage. He had so much to think about that he preferred walking down to the Parker. The Corso was deserted. Once he stopped and looked down over the parapet, toward the harbor. The lights formed a necklace of iridescent pearls, flickering and shimmering like real ones that lay upon a woman's breast. Pearls. Once more he saw the chamois bag. It seemed to dance a devil's dance before his eyes, and his nails bit his palms as he struggled to crush down the ugly head of distrust. This mystery concerned him, therefore he hated it. It wasn't the right kind of mystery; it repelled, it did not attract.

And yet, there had been no alarm, no evidence of guilt; only a troubled weariness. "Throw it away," was all she had said.

"Lord, if I only knew something about women!" he murmured—a cry which has beset the male mind since the days of Adam.

He turned away from the parapet and gazed toward Vesuvius. To-night there was an inter-

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mittent glowing above the crater. Hadn't she called it the Pipe of Vulcan? He could not see the outlines of the great, sinister heap; all that was visible was the dull glowing. It was exactly as if some giant stood over there in the east, smoking his pipe in the dark.

Slowly he set his step toward his hotel, his head down, his broad shoulders bent. Why, he ought to be the happiest man in the world. Never any more worry about his pay-envelope; free to come and go as he pleased; and the great world ready for his explorations; a fine dream about to be realized. And now a woman must enter his life and spoil it all. Somewhere he had read that for every desire fulfilled another appeared in its place.

He was destined to be jarred out of these melancholy thoughts. At the hotel the manager approached him affably.

"You received the package all right, Mr. Grogan?"

"Package? What package?"

"Why, the package you sent for about an hour ago."

"The wrong Grogan. I haven't sent for any package."

"But you must have," protested the manager, his air of affability vanishing and one of perturbation taking its place. "Besides, I have your note or order. I was very careful to compare your signature with the authorized slip which you signed upon taking the room."

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"Let me see that note," said William, wondering what it was all about.

The note was produced, and William was forced to admit that the signature resembled his own. The body of the note, however, was rank forgery.

"There's been a mistake somewhere, unless some one's playing a practical joke. I'll hike up to the room and see if anything's missing."

"I trust, Mr. Grogan—"

"Oh, that's all right. That signature would have fooled any one. But I can't understand why any one would take the trouble to play a joke on me. I'll be down in a few minutes and let you know what's happened."

He waved aside the man at the door of the electric lift and ran up the stairs three at a bound. It was quicker this way. He was a little bewildered, but no particular worry beset him. Moreover, he was not very keen. The tattered photograph occupied too prominent a place in his thoughts.

Entering his room, he sent a swift, cursory glance about. So far as he could see nothing had been disturbed. The articles on the bureau remained as he had left them. No genuine thief would have overlooked those coral cuff-links for which he had paid twelve dollars. He investigated the bureau drawers; there was no sign of alien hands. He rumbled his hair perplexedly. A package. What kind of a package?

"Aw. . . ." But he did not complete the thought orally.

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There was a row of shoes at the left of his fat suit-case, the only piece of luggage he had brought ashore. He had purchased a pair of patent-leathers, a pair of stout tans, a pair of low calf, and the pair of walking-shoes he had on. The stout tans were among the missing. He looked under the bed, behind the bureau, and under the chairs. The tans were gone. Then he laughed. A sneak had pinched a pair of his shoes!

"What do you know about that, Isobel? A pair of shoes, brand-new, at four-fifty! Well, say!"

He sat down and began to chuckle. He took out a cigar, but he did not light it. His gaze, having traveled again to the gap in the alignment of shoes, traveled a little farther and became focused upon the lock of his suit-case. It dangled by a single screw.

Immediately a fountain of wool and linen and what-nots filled the air. His letter of credit had been in that suit-case, and it was now nowhere to be found. Two thousand and six hundred dollars, all gone to glory!

He had mounted the stairs three at a bound; he went down scarcely touching any of them. He was fighting mad, but cool.

"Anything missing, Mr. Grogan?" The manager was plainly worried. The hotels along the Corso seldom encountered difficulties of this character.

"Ye-ah. A pair of shoes and my letter of credit are missing."

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"Frightful!"

"Now don't get excited. What I want to know is, what did this messenger look like?"

"This is a terrible misfortune! He was about your age, perhaps. I was particular to note that he wore a blue serge suit, baggy at the knees, and had on a straw hat. I could not say that he was either poorly or well dressed."

"What kind of shoes did he have on?"

"I did not notice them."

"That's bad. Sometimes a man 'll forget to change them when he goes masquerading. He didn't go into my room alone?"

"Certainly not. The head waiter accompanied him."

"Send for him."

The head waiter's explanation was simple. He had escorted the messenger up to the room, watched him take a pair of shoes and wrap them up in a newspaper. He had then locked the door.

"Did you come with the man?"

"No, sir. I went with him to the head of the stairs, giving him the key."

"Which he gave to me," interpolated the manager.

"Somehow he got back before he gave you that key. Well, the damage is done. But I guess he wasted his time. The letter is no good without the identification book which I have in my pocket."

"That news takes a great weight off my shoulders, Mr. Grogan. A word to Cook in the morning will stop the letter from being used anywhere in

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the world. If your bankers cannot find the letter after a certain length of time, they will reissue it, deducting your previous withdrawals. Tourists make so many strange requests, and are so irritable if we don't comply, that we are forced often to act against our judgment. If the messenger had been a native, he would never have got as far as the head of the stairs."

"He wasn't an Italian?"

"If he was, he was a supremely clever one. He talked and acted like an Englishman. A number of English stop here, so I have reason to believe that he was English."

"Well, so long as I can stop him from touching my money, that's enough for me. I don't blame you any. But it's some mystery. How'd he know it was in my grip? How'd he know that I wasn't carrying it? Sure, it might be chance, and then it mightn't."

William returned to his room, not at all grateful for this peculiar diversion. He undressed and sat down on the bed, smoking. Tobacco always had a way of loosening up the knots in his head. He groped backward. He recalled the robbery on board the *Ajax* and the subsequent return of the wallet, its contents intact.

"I got it!" He thwacked his thigh. "The guy that took my wallet took the letter of credit, too. That's the answer. But why pick on William Grogan? It don't listen right. Let's see. Who'd get any fun out of tripping me up? . . . Wops!"

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He knew something of the Italians; they never forgot, they never forgave. A friend of the men he had sent to Sing Sing had crossed on the *Ajax*. He had always wondered when those Black-Handers would start reprisals. And *La Mano Nera* in Italy was backed by the Camorra, which sounded Irish and wasn't. He was positive now that he had hold of the main thread. He must watch out for an Italian who spoke excellent English, who no doubt had been born in New York.

Having reached this conclusion, logical enough from his point of view, he laid the butt of his cigar in the ash-tray, turned out the lights, rolled over and went to sleep, untroubled by dreams. He did not know that there were men here and there across the world who would have traded their millions for those nine blank hours which he accepted as a matter of course.

Next morning Cook sent out the alarm. If the missing letter was not found within thirty days a new letter would be issued and forwarded either to Cairo or Colombo. All William stood to lose was time. To make sure that he would not lack for immediate funds he cabled Burns to send five hundred to Cairo.

"And so, sister, you've got to carry brother Bill's money. I haven't told anybody but you."

"But I might lose it."

"I'll take the risk." He did not confide to her the suspicions he held in regard to the Italian vendetta. Worrying her would not better his situation. "By the way, where's Camden?"

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"He left for Venice late last night."

"Uh-huh. What's your idea of him?"

"Moody, but very interesting." She was rather non-committal.

In Rome William was attacked upon three occasions, at night, always when he was alone. Each time he had struck one good blow; thereupon, much as he disliked doing it, he had taken to his heels. Italians were handy with their knives. In Florence he had two narrow escapes. After these visitations he did not go prowling across the Ponte Vecchio at night in the endeavor to reconstruct some of Benvenuto Cellini's lesser adventures. I might add that he no longer slept dreamlessly. He even went so far as to write Burns to learn if any of those Italians he had sent up the river were out. The affair began to get on his nerves, tough as they were. He was not particularly disturbed on his own account; but how was he to watch over Ruth, when a knife was hourly threatening his back? Of course, he said nothing to her about these mysterious contacts in the night. He set a smiling face for his school-teacher, and she suspected nothing.

Neither of them took note of a new fact. Their fellow-tourists were beginning to smile when they saw these two together, which was daily and everywhere. Romance! Humanity smiles indulgently upon the young male and female when they walk together, upon love or the suggestion of it. Heaven knows why they smile; the real thing is serious enough.

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One afternoon as they came down from Fiesole, twenty or thirty carriages in all, like a funeral cortege or a wedding—you could take your choice—William voiced a plaint.

"In Rome I saw all the churches—St. Peter's, the Vatican—the galleries, the museums, the wrecks and ruins; same here in Florence. And what do I know? Nothing. I can't tell the name of a picture, a church, or a ruin. I guess I'm solid ivory and no cracks."

"Don't let that bother you. No human being can assimilate all these things at once. Years from now you'll be staring over your pipe, and all these wonderful beauties will return to you, one by one; you'll understand and your heart will glow with gladness. You don't want to see these things just to go back and tell about them. They are for us to dream over."

"Look!" he cried, suddenly.

"Where?"

"Well, what do you know about that! See, they're *building* something, putting up something that's not a ruin, that's brand-new!"

"Now you're trying to be sarcastic."

"Maybe I am. But my head seems filled with one of these dago soups; a thousand years, and you couldn't tell what was in it."

They came into Venice at sunset. For once William was bereft of speech. The brooding silence of this magic city in the sea laid hold of him.

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"Beautiful, beautiful!" murmured the girl at his side. "And I have lived to see it!"

Several times on the way to the hotel she grasped his arm to call his attention (as if that were necessary) to some enchanting marble, the towers rose in the flood of sunset, the base of it dark and gloomy like Alpine ice. Each time she touched him he trembled. Sometimes he found it very hard to be so close to her.

"Oh, we mustn't stay indoors here; we must be out in the sunshine every minute. I'm going to love it. I don't want to go any farther. I want to stay here all the rest of my life."

They were keen to ride around the canals that night; and William engaged a gondolier immediately after dinner. After they had listened to the barge concerts (and the inevitable toreador song), they let the man at the sweep go whither he listed. He slid into the Giudecca and wound in and out among the destroyers, the liners, sloops, yachts, and lighters. They were gliding under the stern of a handsome sea-going yacht, white as frost in this incomparable moonlight.

William slowly spelled out the name.

"*E-l-s-a; Elsa*, New York. Well, here's a boat all the way from the old burg."

A strange thing happened. The girl gave a little cry and huddled down close to the black cushions of the gondola.

CHAPTER XI

"WHAT'S the matter?" asked William, bending toward her in alarm.

"I . . . I . . . Nothing!" she stammered. "I feel a little dizzy. Would you mind if I returned to the hotel? You see, we were half a day on that crowded train, and perhaps I'm overdone."

"Sure we'll go back."

He looked at the vanishing stern of the yacht, then down at the girl again. They entered a circle of light, and he saw that her hands were clasped convulsively. It was, he surmised, something about the name Elsa. And who was Elsa? A sister? A bit of the old cynicism crept into his mind. It might be that she had a sister named Elsa, a sister who had not turned out right. As he coned this thought over it assumed logical proportions far more agreeable than any he had previously imagined. Here was something that had sense to it. What was more reasonable than that she should flee from the horror and misery of such a tragedy and wrap herself up in mystery?

It was plainly apparent that the name of the yacht had disturbed Ruth, and it was equally clear that she had told a lie about it.

"You mustn't come in on my account," she

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protested, as the gondola nosed up to the hotel's marble steps, awash with the rising tide.

"You're better?" He had to ask her that.

"Oh yes. Just a bit tired and fussy, perhaps. I'll be all right to-morrow. You know we are all going out to Murano and Burano to see them make glass. So don't get lost. . . . brother!"

"I'll take care of William," he laughed. "There won't be anybody jumping on my back in Venice, unless they can walk on water."

"Jumping on your back? What do you mean?"

William succeeded in retrieving his blunder. "Why, everybody's been warning me not to go out alone nights for fear of robbers. But they haven't worried a nickel out of me yet. Say, I think I'll jog around to the hotels and see if I can't pick up Camden. It's only half past nine. This bargee talks a little English, and I can say *albergo* without biting my tongue off. Good night."

Noiselessly the gondola slipped back among the painted piles into free water, and presently its lantern went bobbing up the Grand Canal. The girl watched the flickering yellow light until a steamboat cut across it. Then she went inside.

William lighted a cigar and slumped down against the cushions.

"Where, *Signore?*" asked the gondolier, touching his hat.

"Anywhere for an hour; the Grand Canal and back."

William did not care where the gondolier carried him. He wanted leisure to think, to reconstruct

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his castle of romance, to discover an excuse which would prove impregnable, like Gibraltar. As there was no wind to speak of, the house of cards went up rapidly.

Elsa Warren; he was now positive that such a person existed. She had gone wrong, and the disgrace of it had been too much for her sister to bear. He saw the picture: Ruth staid and sensible and hard-working, Elsa vain and selfish and flighty, and no doubt, lazy. That kind of a girl generally went wrong. Ruth had tried to save her and had failed.

The cigar was pleasant, the night was glorious, full of ineffable moonshine which fired the heavy dews on church domes and marble porticos, making the house of cards the only real, substantial thing of the moment. Whimsically he pictured himself in court, arguing the case for the defendant. His arguments seemed to have made a profound impression upon the jury. He rested his case. Slowly the prosecuting attorney rose. William confessed that his opponent's thin, wintry smile was rather disquieting. What was he going to say?

"Your Honor, I have in the first place to acquaint you with the fact that there is no such a person as Elsa Warren and never was."

William stirred uneasily.

"In the second place, in order to demolish my opponent's plausible defense, I have only to place before you this torn photograph, this little chamois bag, and to submit this brief

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prayer, lately uttered by the defendant herself on board the ship *Ajax*."

William sat up stiffly. He heard these words as surely as he heard the lap-lap of the water against the sides of the gondola.

"I ask the strict attention of the jury, your Honor," went on the prosecuting attorney, "while I recite this prayer: 'Dear God, make me strong. Take out of my heart the evil longings. Give me strength always to be good. Let me not covet that which is not mine. Clean my heart and put temptation behind me. Amen!'"

"Aw, hell!" said William, aloud, crumpling back in his seat.

"*Si, Signore*," replied the gondolier, believing he had received an order to return to the hotel.

William did not hear him. He was busy fighting his way out of court, out of the house of cards that was tumbling about his ears, out into realities again.

She was always praying. Never they entered a cathedral that she did not kneel in some obscure corner, quite unmindful of his proximity. Well, he loved her none the less for that. But he knew that it was the yacht itself that had provoked that stifled cry. A damnable thought seeped in through the whys and wherefores, but he drove it out, cursing himself for a low beast. After all, hadn't she asked him not to put her on a pedestal? Hadn't she said that she was a human being like the rest? The pedestal was wobbling, and he mutely sought heaven with his gaze to see if there

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was not some way of steadying that shaft of alabaster. He was only human himself, and his thoughts would go in a human and not in a celestial direction.

His school-teacher, with her springing step, day in and day out, as regular as the clock; his school-teacher who knew what all these things meant, who could dig his soul out of him when she played the piano. . . .

"*Signore!*"

William looked up. They had returned to the marble steps of the hotel. The porter was putting out the carpeted landing-plank.

"No, no; I don't want to go in yet," said William. "Say, porter, tell the man to row me over to that white yacht there, the one next to the torpedo-boat. Ye-ah. Tell him to row around it slow and close."

"Yes, sir." The porter volleyed a few phrases at the gondolier, who returned them with interest, gesticulating wildly.

William grinned in spite of the ache in his heart. He never would get the hang of these Latin voices and elbows. Dozens of times he had stopped (shall I say hopefully?) to see the fight, only to learn that there wasn't going to be any, that what looked like the beginning of hostilities was in truth nothing more serious than an exchange of amenities.

The yacht *Elsa* was dark except for the ports of the dining-saloon. In Venetian waters the voice carries remarkably far. As the gondola was edging

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along under these lighted ports, William heard laughter—men's laughter. He raised his hand quickly to signify that he wished to stop. He was not overscrupulous to-night.

" . . . And so I sent it back to New York."

"But why didn't you keep it?"

"What good would that have done? Besides, the jackal isn't so much a thief as he is a taker of leavings. Bah!"

There followed the light tinkle of glass. William strained his ears. The voice of the man who called himself a jackal was tantalizingly familiar and at the same time it persistently eluded identification.

"I tell you the whole thing smacks of cheap melodrama," declared the jackal.

"I wish you'd drop that lecturing tone," replied the other voice, which was not familiar at all.

"The jackal apologizes."

"Jackal?"

"Well, what am I if not a jackal? Why put frills on it and call me your man of affairs? Why try to get around it with verbal soft-soap? I'm a sneak. It doesn't matter that once upon a time I lived on the decent side of the street. The fact is incontrovertible that I'm your jackal. I've done this kind of work for you before; so what the devil? True, I never bargained for a chase like this. I've done the work you've hired me to do, and here's my little bill for the same, Orestes!"

"Orestes," murmured William; "sounds like dago or Spanish."

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"And the bill shall be paid on the nail in the morning."

"I never doubted that for a moment. There's one thing about us two: when I promise to do a dirty bit of work for you, I do it; and when you promise to pay, you pay."

"What the devil's got into you to-night?"

"I am getting older, and the older I grow the sicker I grow. Want the truth? I don't like the looks of this job for a cent. I think you're in the wrong valley, my Pied Piper. If I were in your patent-leathers, I'd turn this hooker's nose back toward New York and stick to the old stuff."

Below, William scowled. This conversation was all more or less Greek to him. One voice was familiar, but for the life of him he could not place it. It might be that Ruth had told him the truth, that she was tired and fussy because of the long journey on the train.

". . . Ahoy, there! What do you mean by sneaking up alongside this way?"

"Where do you get that noise?" snarled back William, furious at having been interrupted. A few more words between the two men inside the yacht might have decided the matter one way or the other definitely. "This is free water, I guess."

"Sure it is; and the freer the better for you. We don't like snoops sticking their noses into our paint. Get a move on or I'll drop a bucket of slops on you, my handsome rubberneck."

"Try it, you big boob! I wouldn't mind a few minutes' close harmony with you."

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"Lor' lumme, if it ain't some white hope out for a lark!" jeered the man at the rail. "Move on, and none of your lip. You hear me? I'll give you twenty-nine seconds to sheer of."

"Hotel," growled William, sitting down. The man above had two distinct advantages—height and right.

The veneer with which we solemnly incase ourselves consists mostly of the observance of certain formalities of conduct; under stress of emotion this veneer is not impervious; it cracks. We don't listen at windows or peek through keyholes, ordinarily. William was perfectly well aware of this fact. But it was not idle curiosity, this act of his. Subtly he construed it as merely reconnoitering the defense of an enemy, dim, nebulous, but none the less menacing.

"Here, what's the row out there?"

A head appeared at one of the saloon ports. The face was dead black against the yellow light behind it.

"A tourist snooping about, sir," called down the seaman in answer.

"Bid him clear out."

"I'm clearing out," said William, as the gondola shot forward. "If I've scraped off any of the frosting from that angel-cake of yours, charge it to Cook."

He heard an order shouted, but he was now too far away to gather its import. About two minutes later a blinding flash of light struck his face, for he was looking over his shoulder. He ducked, pulling

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down his hat instinctively. They had turned the yacht's search-light upon him. It was only when the silver flame of the ferrule turned the point of the customs-house that the gondola was able to lose the powerful rays.

"Hotel," repeated William, moodily.

Once in his room he smoked his pipe until his tongue smarted. The yacht *Elsa*, Ruth and those two unknown men (one of whom possessed a voice which irritated him beyond measure because he knew that he had heard it before but couldn't identify it) were associated in some sinister way. It was useless to argue to the contrary. The name of the yacht had forced a cry from the girl. One of these men had spoken of a chase. One admitted that he was a jackal, and the other paid on the nail. William did not ask what was paid for on the nail. It seemed as if a thousand little windows were opening in his brain and that his soul was running frantically about in a vain endeavor to shut them against the invasion of a terrible thought.

It was futile to shake his head, to beat fist upon palm, to give way to a torrent of self-invective; the thought was not to be dissipated by will. . . . A house all his own, a garden to play in, a wife and a couple of kids! He laughed, but the laughter strangled and died in his throat. He held his head in his hands. He was badly hurt; for he wasn't the kind who fell in love and out, as one exchanged an old coat for a new. It had gone down into the very marrow of his bones, and

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would stay there, part and parcel of his marrow, until the crack of doom.

The basic characteristic of the Celt is loyalty. It is historically true that loyalty is about all the gold he has; and many a king has drawn upon it and later repudiated the loan. But still he goes on, up and down the world, giving his loyalty when and where it is asked and taking in exchange promissory notes that go to protest. As a soldier he has been loyal to faithless kings, as a husband he has been loyal to faithless wives. So, what though his heart was heavy and his brain in turmoil, William buckled on that bright armor which was his heritage and swore to uphold his pledge. Then he went to bed.

On the fourth and last morning in Venice part of the riddle was solved. That night the tourists were to leave for Brindisi, where they were to pick up the *Ajax*. William and Ruth had gone early into St. Mark's to feed the doves. It was nearly nine; previously they had fed the birds by half after eight and were off on their sight-seeing pilgrimage.

She was always stealing glances over her shoulders now. There was not exactly the hunted look in her eyes, but there was indication of tense anxiety. William made no comment, asked no questions, but jogged along at her side with his usual comic observations. Sooner or later, if left alone, she would discover to him the man he wanted. He had no plan of action; but whenever he thought of this meeting his nails bit into his palms pleasurably.

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This morning he prevailed upon her to stand by one of the huge bronze flagstaffs and have her photograph taken. She had promised, and he refused to listen to any excuses relative to dress and hats and carelessly done hair. He threw a handful of corn into the air above her, and the camera-man snapped her with the slate-colored doves fluttering upon her shoulders and arms. It was a charming picture, with that wonderful background of colored marbles and white sunshine.

"Aren't they beautiful, the soft, coral-footed, feather-breasted things! If I ever have a garden I'm going to have a dove-cote."

"As many as you like," said William.

She was naturally without the least suspicion that there was anything serious behind this pleasantry. Besides, she would have dismissed it as absurd. She had not yet really labeled William. Women usually mark the male as dangerous or harmless, and she had come to accept him as neither the one nor the other: which is to say that William was a diplomat of no mean order. He was always at her side, and she was beginning to turn over to him the trifling little labors of the day. He saw to it that she had the latest magazines; he ran unimportant errands, argued with porters and cabmen and shopkeepers, shooed off importunate beggars, handled the tickets, and sometimes took care of her circular notes or express checks because she had a weakness for old filets.

Perhaps it was because he accepted these labors with a comradeship which was neither presuming

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nor particularly humble that she had not bothered to catalogue him. When he shook hands with her, there was never that extra pressure which the average woman learns to dread.

William guarded his secret well; neither in his voice nor in his eyes was there ever a hint of the volcano bubbling and seething below. It was only when he was alone and unobserved that little craters opened up to relieve the pressure. No doubt this required a good deal of will-power. But there was this fact always before him: he was going to watch over this school-teacher of his until she was safely home.

So, then, to her he was a good comrade, amusing, lively; but she rarely carried any thought of him over the threshold of her room.

She stepped down from the pedestal, brushing the corn dust from her hands and sleeves.

"Say, sister, would you mind feeding the doves for five minutes while I hike up the alley there," pointing under the clock, "and get some tobacco? I'm dying for a smoke."

"Run along. I could stay here all day with these doves."

William thereupon settled his hat firmly and darted across the square, disappearing up the "alley," as he called the Merceria.

Ruth squatted to the pavement and began sprinkling the corn about. She had learned that it did not pay to feed the doves too much at once. They were ungrateful little beggars; and, well fed, they were quite likely to depart by twos and threes

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to their perches among the statues and capitals of the palaces. The last yellow kernel vanished and Ruth stood up.

"And so I find you!"

Ruth turned her head at the sound of this voice which was not William Grogan's. Beyond this action, however, she was unable to move. She could only stare and stare, hypnotized. Presently the numbness gave way to needle-like tingling, and she found that she could use her legs. She retreated slowly, intending to run when all her strength had returned, but unfortunately for this project her shoulders came into contact with a pillar of the portico. The stranger had followed her step by step and paused when she paused.

William, approaching rapidly across the square, saw the tableau. A masher? He would attend to that. He began to run. He arrived just as the stranger laid hold of Ruth's wrist.

Immediately the stranger felt two strong hands embed their fingers in his shoulders and he was irresistibly whirled right about face. The freckled countenance he looked into was wreathed in the most amiable of smiles, but the blue eyes were as cold and beautiful and merciless as winter stars.

CHAPTER XII

AT the side of the doorway leading into one of those amazing Venetian glass-shops stood two carabinieri. They were watching the little scene curiously, wondering if they would be called in to take part. In St. Mark's the carabinieri are always watching. There is at least one spot in Italy where a woman may walk alone, assured of protection. So these two watched and waited. The smile on William's face puzzled them. They did not see his eyes as Ruth did.

To her the smile was not a puzzle, but a revelation, for she saw the tiger behind it. The eyes seemed actually to diffuse an electric fluid so strong that it touched and vivified her who stood at least three feet away. He must have looked like this that day when, unarmed, he had gone down boldly into the den of the Black-Handers and fought for Tommaso's boy. The conspicuity of the freckles alone would have marked the high tide of his anger, none the less deadly because of the bantering smile.

And she had patronized him, casually accepted the gift of his friendship as one accepted a book, a box of candy, or a bouquet of flowers! She could not have been more astonished if she had seen a

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lazy house-cat suddenly transformed into a lord of the jungle. The ridiculous complacency of her previous attitude came home to her forcibly; and instantly she knew that William Grogan was become an integral part of her future. She was able to grasp this fact hazily. Strange are the inconsistencies of human nature. An hour ago he might have passed out of her life and left only a negligible ripple of regret behind. And now she wanted to hold this loyalty in hoops of steel.

As William stared into the dark, handsome face of his prisoner his heart seemed to drop down, down into some bottomless pit over which the winds played gipsy music. Gipsy music! He saw a quiet restaurant, a young woman in flight, a man in evening clothes pursuing, his own intervention. The smile on his face, however, did not waver.

"Well, Sir Hurlbert," he drawled, "we meet again!"

"Take your hands off my shoulders!" cried the stranger, angrily. There was something vaguely familiar about this truculent though smiling face so close to his own, but in that moment he could not recollect where he had seen it.

"Would you like 'em around your throat?" The bantering smile vanished. "You *scum!* If it wasn't for those cocked hats, I'd break every bone in your body! Can't leave 'em alone, no matter where you travel, can you? Listen. If you ever see me again, cross over to the other side of the street. That's all for this morning, m' lord."

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William dropped his hands and stepped back quietly, ready in case the other made a hostile move, which William naturally hoped he would.

But the man of the world merely settled his deranged coat-collar and turned to the carabinieri, who had moved forward. His Italian was good. The carabinieri listened passively.

Ruth knew only a few Italian phrases, not enough to permit her to follow this monologue; but instinct warned her that a very bad case was being made out against William.

She interrupted. "*Non é vero! non é vero!*" ("It is not true!") She laid her hand upon William's arm and smiled with a confidence she did not feel.

One of the carabinieri smiled back at her, looked calmly into the stranger's face, and made a simple gesture with his white-gloved hand. There was a protest. The second gesture was imperative. Recognizing the futility of further argument, the stranger shrugged and walked away.

Then the carabinieri turned their backs upon William and Ruth and strolled across the square. They were always reluctant to arrest these mad Americans, with their strange ideas of personal liberty, their utter disregard of the laws of the countries they rushed into and out of breathlessly. If they could settle such encounters with simple street justice, it was sufficient. Besides, the young woman was pretty.

"Please take me back to the hotel," said Ruth.

"Sure, sister."

William tucked her arm under his and started

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off, the old familiar smile wrinkling his cheeks. He measured his steps with hers and talked irrelevantly. At the door of the hotel she faced him. She had been crying, and he had not suspected!

"Aw, sister! You mustn't let anything like that bother you. What's a chance encounter with a man like that, when you know I'm coming around the corner? There's only a few of his breed; the rest of us average up fair."

"You . . . you know who he is?"

"All New York knows Norton Colburton, I guess. I've seen him at boxing-matches. What's the use of talking about him? But it's on the card that when I run into him again it'll take a regiment of bone-setters to put Humpty Dumpty together again."

"Please, no; for my sake."

"I'll think it over. What line of talk was he giving the police?"

"I couldn't understand; and I spoke the only phrase I could think of, trusting to luck."

"And luck it was, sister—Irish luck. I felt it in my bones he was trying to land me in jail. Those cocked hats are all sunshine. I won't laugh at 'em any more. You see, Colburton and I had a clash one night last June. He recognized me as the guy who butted into one of his games. I was coming along just as a young woman came running out of Juneau's. I couldn't see what she looked like, but I had a hunch that she had good reasons for hiking. Colburton came rushing out a minute later, but he didn't go far. Now, you run along

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to your room and stay there until lunch. Then we'll take the steamer over to the Lido."

"You're a good man, William Grogan."

"Aw! You trust me, sister, don't you?"

She caught his hand between her two small ones and pressed tightly. "Absolutely, as I have never trusted any man but my father."

"Well, when I gave you my hand that day on the *Ajax*, that was all there was to it."

She let go his hand and ran blindly for the stairs.

William stared at the vacant doorway for a moment, shrugged, and walked down to the end of the Calle, or little street, where the bright ferrules of the gondolas bobbed a howdy-do to him. Several gondoliers raised their black felt hats expectantly, but he shook his head and perched himself upon the rail and glowered across the water at the yacht *Elsa*.

"Scum!" William growled as he saw a gondola draw alongside the ladder. "But wait; I'm going to get you some day just where I want you, and what the monkey did to the parrot. . . ."

He gazed on, wishing that he had some secret kind of torpedo, guided solely by the will, to launch at that yacht. Money; he thought he could do these things because he had money! A series of expletives rumbled over William's lips, for when he felt strongly he swore strongly. What would you? He was in many essentials a primitive man; nevertheless, he had a fine code of honor and, what is more, plenty of moral fiber to

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back it. To cheat, to lie, to borrow money and never pay it back, to break a promise, to play hooky on the job, to waste the pay-envelope across the bar while the landlady waited, to ogle women on the street, to hunt them for amusement—these things went against the straight, clean grain of him.

Women? he mused. He would never understand women, not if he had as many around him as King Solomon had and overtopped Methuselah in the matter of years. So she had run afoul of Norton Colburton, got her fingers in the cobweb, and the spider had nipped them? And then to run four thousand miles, with the idea of running sixteen thousand more! That was the real puzzle. To get rid of the attentions of men like Colburton women did not have to run any farther than the nearest police precinct. But twenty thousand miles! What was the idea?

He slumped forward on the rail.

Why did they do it? Sometimes they went astray for a great love; he could understand that. But what he could not understand was that ordinarily an automobile was enough, a necklace, maybe a little silk and a little fur to excite the envy of her friends. True, often the poor little shop-girl sold out for food and shoes; he could understand that, too. But the automobile? . . . No, there wasn't any mystery now; nearly all the little blocks of the puzzle fitted in their allotted places. An old story—God alone knew how old—the ancient man-and-woman story. A pinch of poverty,

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a taste of the winter wind, and they gave up. Sometimes the unattractive one found the river the only way. Always they wanted a warm fire for their pretty shins and the devil for butler. They couldn't hang on just a little longer, could they? They had to give up in the middle of the fight—and always the pretty ones.

His school-teacher! How many times had he watched her trim feet flit one-two-three past his cellar window! And here she was and there *he* was! She had poked her curious fingers into the web, and hadn't got away quite free. A low crook with women, and all his money couldn't change that.

"Well, somewhere between here and San Francisco I'm going to get you, Handsome-Is. I know your breed. You won't give up until you're broken up; and I'm going to turn that little trick."

After a while he remembered her tears, and the taste of life became less bitter. There might be a block or two in the puzzle that wasn't in its right place. A fragment of the prayer recurred to him. "Give me always strength to be good." He slid off the rail. Maybe that line was open to a new interpretation. Sooner or later she would tell him; it wasn't square to judge a case without having all the evidence. He knew what the matter was, he had seen too much of the seamy side of life, and when confronted by such problems as this his outlook was on the bias, cynical, despite the fact that he knew that circumstantial evidence had ruined more women than it had hanged men.

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"Say, I'm a real guy, I am," he burst forth, angrily. "How do I know that it was Ruth that ran out of Juneau's? Suppose it was a chance meeting. He never lets a pretty face go by. What do I know, anyhow? What if he did have hold of her wrist? I've got a whole lot of charity. What has she told me? Nothing. Buck up, Bill, and go buy the little lady some flowers. They may come in handy."

So the upshot of these cogitations, these little excursions into blind alleys, was a visit to the near-by florist's. He purchased a dozen beautiful roses and had them sent up to her room. He loved flowers as he loved children. He never conjured up that fairy-tale house of his without seeing lilac-bushes and ramblers. He had no idea about formal beds, nor did he know the names of more than half a dozen flowers. But he wanted the whole front yard choked with color and perfume. Many a time, in the old days, his newspapers snug under his arm, he had paused before some florist's shop, the bitter snow chilling his thinly clad legs, and wondered how there could be roses in midwinter.

The girl cried over those flowers.

But the gift did not rid him of the infernal speculation. Twice he became lost because he saw only the pavement; and half a dozen times he was brought up sharply by some canal opening unexpectedly at his feet. If his theories had been solids there would have been many a mysterious splash in the Venetian canals that morning;

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for one by one his theories went overboard. We all have our *Ponte dei Sospiri*, our Bridge of Sighs, and William was crossing his.

At two o'clock that afternoon they took the steamboat for the Lido. William was deeply puzzled, for there was no sign of recent tears. She was gay. He had yet to learn that woman with mortal hurt can laugh. She led him to the bench on the starboard bow, thus placing the Giudecca at their backs. Two birds with one stone was his comment; for this bench was the choicest. From it one saw the rainbow city sink back into the soft veils of the September mists, and a little later, when they were half-way across the lagoon, the lordly snow-crests of the Dolomites came into view.

Throughout the afternoon he found himself being led. In vain he waited for some word regarding the episode of the morning. It seemed incredible that this butterfly creature was the woman he had seen in tears.

She plumped down into the fine white sand and built castles, commented upon the variegated costumes of the bathers and the equally variegated physiques. She recounted amusing incidents among her scholars. His bewilderment continued to grow until it served to render him monosyllabic. There wasn't a crack in this astonishing armor of hers. And he had started out with the idea of making her forget her troubles! But as they sat down in the pavilion for tea and cakes, later, he heard her gasp painfully.

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"What is it?"

She pointed out to sea. William turned and saw the yacht *Elsa* boring southward down the blue Adriatic, serenely beautiful in the September sunshine.

"Forget it, sister. Things like that 'll happen anywhere. When a woman travels alone she's a hard row to hoe, believe me. But there's more good men than bad. Gee! if those cocked hats hadn't been in the way, I'd have whaled the day-lights out of him. You can't talk to that kind. They're like hyenas; they don't understand petting. You have to beat 'em up. And now, you're not standing alone; Willie Grogan's in your corner."

He laid his big, warm hand over hers. It was the first time he had ever ventured to touch her in this fashion. She smiled faintly and withdrew her hand.

Presently, as her gaze wandered seaward again, this hand stole up unconsciously and rested where the little chamois bag lay hidden. Upon the observant William the act had the effect of a stab. Why hadn't they left him in his smelly cellar, among his drains and pipes and unspoiled dreams?

What was in that chamois bag? What lay in the past back of it? After all, had it been Ruth that night? Was he letting his imagination establish as fact something which had never happened? She might have met Colburton casually in New York, and he had taken advantage of it

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that morning in the Piazza. Colburton was not above that; that was his particular style. There was nothing in all this to indicate that Ruth was the young woman who had come flying out of the restaurant.

He stared at the yacht again, somberly. The old wives' prescience, which every Irishman has tucked away somewhere in his soul, warned him that he had not seen the last of the *Elsa*. This occult knowledge elated rather than depressed him. A good fight somewhere along the route—he had no objections to that.

Ruth, as she studied that homely face, freckled and sunburnt, with its beautiful eyes singularly idealizing the comic background, not too far away, not too near, just the table between, knew that here was a promise of security such as she had never known. And she mused over the oddities of God's distribution of shapes and souls.

"William Grogan," she murmured.

"Huh?" he said, turning.

"I was thinking out loud."

"And taking my name in vain—uh-huh. Sister, I'm going to ask you just two questions. Answer 'em or not, just as you please. Did you ever meet that man before?"

"Yes." Her voice was dull.

"And was it you that came running out of Juneau's that night last June?" With all his soul he hoped she would say no. It would not matter if she lied; anything but evasion.

She nodded affirmatively. He noticed that her

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agitation was gone; she was only tired and listless. Once more she turned toward the sea.

"That's all I wanted to know, sister. Say, ain't I the little old guardian? Think of me being Johnny-on-the-spot that night!" he added, cheerfully.

In spirit, however, he was already wandering through that human hell whose dimensions are in exact ratio to the strength of one's love. William loved deeply, so he went down deeply. But he knew how to cover up, to hide pain, to jog along without plaint, without hope. Love is only an exalted kind of torture.

CHAPTER XIII

THE tourist train from Venice drew into Brindisi late at night, and the menagerie, as William now dubbed his fellow-tourists, made straight for the Ark. A mild condition of pandemonium reigned for a time. Those who had taken the Sicilian trip, and those who had remained in or near by Naples, had arrived earlier; and they all had to compare notes at once. Of course, William understood that notes of this character were perishable and were not fit to exchange twelve hours later, and he was conditionally charitable in his comments. It was after midnight before the confusion quieted down.

William was genuinely glad to see his two ancients, the archeologists. They had been burrowing among the fresh excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, and were as happy as two boys on a summer's Saturday afternoon. They talked across him, over and around him, crackling like firecrackers. When they finally went below William felt very lonely and very old.

The truth is, the nearest approach to happiness possible to William was work for his hands; and these hands of his had been practically idle for weeks. His brain was healthy and normal, but

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it had not been constructed for the solving of problems. It readily absorbed pictures and construed their import relative to life, but in the realm of pure thinking it was the old story of the round peg in the square hole.

The problem which confronted him was too big for his resources, too deep for his deductions to reach bottom, and too close for a clear perspective. When a man's in love he is not much good for anything else. William tried in vain to crush down this love, to divorce it from the sexual, to play the brother in spirit as well as in fact. But he never came close to Ruth now that he did not long fiercely to snatch her up in his arms and never let her go. How long could he hold out? He lacked the diversions of a well-educated man; the obsession was always with him. Why hadn't he some fad like these two archeologists, something that would for the time being make him forget everything else in the world? Once upon a time he had poked fun at them; now he envied them from the bottom of his heart. They never knew any heartaches. Naturally he forgot that these two old bachelors had once been young like himself. And who was he to say that they carried no tombs in their hearts?

In no mood for his bunk, William loitered by the gang-plank and smoked. There came an interval when both dock and ship seemed deserted except for himself. Presently he saw a man emerge from the gloom, stagger to the gang-plank, and climb up. His efforts were spasmodic. He would

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pull himself up a few feet by hauling at the rail, then he would rest for a moment. William eyed him callously. It was some one who was going to have a fine headache in the morning. As the straggler came under the cluster of lights, he steadied himself as if marshaling what remained of his forces.

"Hello, Camden!"

The man peered into William's face. "Well, if it isn't m' old frien' W. Grogan! But your face is like Gaul, divided int' three parts. Any one of 'em 'll do me. Remember what you said? I'll have that kink in m' back in the morning, all righty. Ye gods, to get back to sea, where it's clean!"

"Want a pilot?" asked William, sensing that the man was deep in liquor.

"Fine! Pilot's the thing I need. Lo's of rocks in the channel, and I've los' m' chart." Camden accepted William's arm and commented upon the brawn of it. "You're 's strong 's a hoist-boom! Don't ever hit me, William; don't you ever hit me." At the companionway he pulled back. "I'll leave it to you, pilot. Three doors, and one of 'em 's right, but which is which, damn me!"

"I guess I'd better steer you down to your bunk, my lord. Some little load. Where'd you collect it?"

"Rome and her seven hills. Got to go to China. Boss wants some queues. Ha, ha! That's good! Boss wants some queues!"

William manœvered him into the cabin and

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turned on the lights. "Where'd you come from?"

"Rome yesterday. Got here 'safternoon. Lonesome 's hell! Old cabin empty; took it. Catch P. & O. boat at Aden. Grogan, it can't be done, it can't be done!" Camden swayed on his heels and William straightened him up. "Twenty years I've been fighting the Demon Rum, and all I can get 's a draw. Game called on 'count of darkness. What? I've fought the Demon all over the old top, and all I get 's a draw. Where'd I come from? A saloon on the water-front, where I swilled champagne with rough-neck sailors. Fine business, eh? Lot of drunken sailors, gentlemen of leisure. Well, you've stumbled on to the state secret. Periodical; got to have it just so often. You're right; keep away from it. It broke me; it 'll break any man in the end. You're a good sort, keep away from it. Periodical sot." Without troubling himself to undress, Camden flung himself into the bunk.

The labored breathing which immediately followed convinced William that there was nothing more for him to do. He gazed down with pitying contempt at the puffed face which alcohol had robbed of everything that made for good looks. He believed in personal liberty, but, on the other hand, he had no sympathy for booze-fighters. And so this was Camden's secret, a periodical boozier? William was familiar with the brand: they kept away from the stuff for weeks at a time, but when they broke loose they were beasts.

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So he was going as far as Aden with them, *en route* for China? Was this the beginning of the bat or the wind-up? Would the fool have brains enough to keep out of sight until he was sober?

William took an old envelope from his pocket and tore off the back. Upon the clean side he scribbled: "Keep your cabin until you sober up.—Grogan." He laid this in the middle of the floor, put out the lights, and went out, closing the door softly.

"A souse!" he murmured. "Pah!"

In his own cabin the patriarchs were sound asleep. Carefully he opened the port, for the cabin was stuffy.

"The old Santy Clauses!"

A pair of clean old sports, and he was going to miss them when they hiked into the deserts for their eternal tombs. That was the way with life; just as you began to grow fond of something it died or went away. . . . He caught his breath sharply. What a chance! To go with these two old boys into the yellow wildernesses, to play the game as they played it, to take his life in his palm for an idea that only a baker's dozen in the world would understand! Why not? What was there to hold him? Why waste any more time coddling a dream that was never going to come true? It couldn't come true; they did not live in the same worlds; he was only a rough-neck, even if he did let his hair grow down to his collar-band. . . . A torn photograph and a chamois bag that might hold diamonds and rubies and pearls—the price

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of what? God, how that hurt! . . . To go away with these two old codgers into the deserts—the Irish soul of him rose to this thought as a trout rises to the May-fly. But in through the port, out of the starry October night, there seemed to drift a plaint.

No. He had tied a burden to his shoulders, of his own volition, and he could not in honor lay it down simply because his heart ached. He stared through the port. What was she thinking of? What was she doing? Was she awake?

Yes, she was awake. The cabin was dark save for the bar of light that came in obliquely from the dock lamp. She was sitting up in bed. The bar of light fell upon her lap; and idly through her fingers trickled a stream of pearls. Over and over she gathered them up and poured them down, without, however, so much as a glance at them.

She could hear the regular breathing of the two spinsters who shared the cabin with her. Life! To some, great canvases; to others, slender little pastels that one tucked away in the corner as pretty but innocuous. Had these withered little old sisters ever been stirred, quickened, tempted? Had anything ever happened (aside from this wonderful voyage) beyond their garden gate?

By and by she put the pearls back into the chamois bag, tied the strings about her neck, and lay back, her eyes still open.

Camden stirred uneasily as the sunshine blazed into the port. He licked his parched lips several

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times with a tongue which was moistureless, then he opened his puffed eyelids, only to close them quickly. The light was like a blow. How his brain throbbed! The damnable thirst! He sat up, reached for the water-bottle, and gulped deep draughts of the lukewarm water. He fell back weakly, a fit of vertigo seizing him. . . . Still dressed, he sat up again and pulled out his watch. He had to close one eye to see the time. Ten o'clock; that would be three hours out of Brindisi.

He rested his head upon his knees and tried to think. How had he reached the cabin? Had some steward helped him down? He unbuttoned his vest and explored the inside pocket. It was empty. He lay back for the second time, exhausted. Feebly he pressed the electric button. "Tea and toast for a pick-me-up." He drank the tea greedily, but his gorge rose at the sight of the golden toast. If only he could pile into a hot salt tub!

"Steward, a hot salt bath; and when the tub is ready, come back and help me to it."

"Yes, sir."

Slowly and painfully Camden got out of the berth and stood up. Swaying and balancing himself, he took off his coat and vest and flung them upon the lounge. Next he took inventory of his pockets. Four louis, a twenty-lire piece and some small silver—all that was left of two hundred pounds.

"Damned fool!"

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Two hundred pounds in three days, on riffraff he did not know, hangers-on at American bars, hotel gamblers, sailors' dives. God! hadn't he one shred of dignity left? Always the latest bout carried him into lower company, fouler haunts. All his good resolutions gone to pot!

The supreme agony came when he stooped over his shoes; and then he knew that this carouse was at an end. He noticed, as the second shoe came off, that the hem of the trousers leg was rolled up. He unrolled it, and a slip of white paper fluttered to the floor. He recovered it. It was a hundred-pound note. He laughed weakly. For the first time in his life, then, he had shown caution in his cups!

He was pulling on his bath-robe when he saw the torn envelope. His first impression was that he had discovered more money, something that had fallen out of his pocket the night before. It was merely William's contribution: "Keep your cabin until you sober up.—Grogan."

Grogan? Camden slowly made a ball of the note and threw it out the port. Grogan?—so the Irishman had piloted him down to the cabin? Camden sat down on the edge of his bunk and stared at the carpet. In this position the steward found him.

"Your bath is ready, sir."

"Thank God for that!"

William did not see Camden again until the *Ajax* dropped anchor in the basin at Piræus. In Athens the man turned up perfectly normal except

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for a pallor which added to his manner a touch of scholarly meditation. Such recuperation was a clear sign to William that Camden's constitution was a tough one. Camden totally ignored the episode.

In Constantinople he put up at the Para Palace; and as this hotel was not included in Mr. Cook's itinerary, William saw little or nothing of him. William did not miss him to any considerable extent; yet, Camden was likable. He had been everywhere and seen everything, and he had imparted to William many a serviceable bit of information. There was only a grain or two of William's original dislike. The majority of these grains had been swept aside by Camden's apparent indifference to Ruth's charms.

The tourists remained four days in the city of pariah dogs; and William was more interested in the habits of these homeless animals than in all the mosques lumped together. The way the brutes had divided up the city among themselves was a whole volume on local politics.

On the night of the fourth day William decided to tempt fate once more. He wanted to prove to himself that the assaults in Italy had been acts of the Black-Handers advised from New York. Since Florence there had been no demonstration. If he could prowl about Constantinople at night without molestation, it would confirm his suspicions that outside of Italy he was immune.

He prowled through the city until after midnight, and nothing happened more serious than

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sundry snaps and curses from sleeping dogs and beggars. He had dropped his enemies down the horizon—a very comfortable feeling. In Smyrna he visited the dance-halls along the water-front. This, too, was barren of results, if you excepted an altercation over the price of the syrupy coffee. He was able to smooth out this difficulty by adopting the oldest-known method—he paid ten times too much.

It was in dusty, topas-tinted Cairo that he found the world he had been longing for, the world which had irresistibly drawn him out of the humdrum of drains and catch-basins. It was this strange, smelly, colorful Orient that his warm Irish soul was going to revel in, to memorize in detail.

The marvels of antiquity in Italy and Greece had scarcely scratched his soul, though he had not been impervious to the geographical beauties of these two countries. Besides, he knew Italians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Turks, and Russians. Burns, Dolan & Co. stood in the center of their bakeries, their shoe-shining parlors, their curio-shops, their tonsorial palaces, their candy and fruit stands; types so familiar that he had long ceased to pay any attention to them. But now he stood upon the enchanted shores of Aladdin's country (or near it). William had read an innocuous translation of the *Arabian Nights*, and he would not have been astonished to see the djinn pop out of soda-bottles. The splendid bronze men of North Africa, with their brown, drab, yellow, and blue burnouses, their brown and white and green

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turbans; their thrilling kettledrums and reeds, their donkeys, their trains of pack-camels, their indescribably bewildering bazaars—his interest in these pictures was ecstatic.

He was one of the many millions who accept life as a series of pictures, impressionable most to those which do not conform with every-day routine. I repeat, what he knew of life had been hammered into him cruelly and unforgetably. To digress for a moment, Burke was Burns's favorite author. Over the office desk was a printed card. William could not remember it literally, but he had the basic truth of it. To quote William in preference to Burke: "Learning is a painful job; a whole lot of pains rammed into your coco whether you wanted 'em or not; and the more pains you could stand up under without throwing up the sponge, the bigger the know; and you could enjoy learning only when you'd digested these pains. I guess my brain, like my stomach, is built on the corned-beef-and-cabbage plan."

Therefore, his mental attitude was inclined toward such pictures as he saw in Cairo. When he read a book he took the story and stored it away; the useful or practical information made a negligible impression and was rarely serviceable. When he was somewhere around fifty his education would be complete—that is, he would possess an unlimited number of pictures, some of them badly done, some of them in outrageous perspective, and some of them so indistinct that he would remember them only as old masters.

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But he knew how to love, which is my warranty for telling his story.

At Assuan he lost his two old archeologists. It was the first heart-tug he had known since his youth. There was something in his soul that went out to those old graybeards, something communicable but inexpressible, which his friends recognized in his hand-shakes and his blundering, lingering farewells.

"Sister, I hate to see those old geezers go. We rowed the first two or three nights, and I used to make fun of them; but after Gibraltar I got to loving them. Kind of funny, huh? An ignorant boob like me cottoning to a couple of book-sharks like those two. Search me why. Think of 'em starting out to-night, with half a dozen camels and a couple of umbrellas! I wish I'd had the right kind of start. I'd have gone with 'em, sure. And in three or four months little Willie Grogan will be back in his cellar. . . . No! What do you know about that? I'd forgotten all about my being a partner in Burns, Dolan & Co.'s! But that was only Irish luck."

"Who was Praxiteles?" Ruth interrupted, whimsically.

"He was the Greek bootblack across the street from the shop. Aw! You know I'm not good at remembering those guys. I've enough names in my head to start a city directory, and all blamed strangers."

"I was only in fun. What do you care? You're learning something fine and splendid every day.

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It's only the pedant who could remember all those names and what they meant. Some day you're going to be all there is of the firm Burns, Dolan & Co.; and what's knowing Praxiteles compared to that? Did it ever occur to you that God has given you something which He gives to few scholars?"

"What's that?" eagerly.

"Some day I'll tell you."

"Eventually—why not now, as the advertisement says?"

"No." She spoke seriously and decidedly, for the reason that she herself did not know exactly what she meant.

"All right. So long 's it's good it 'll keep. But say," he added, with diffidence, "I forgot to tell you. You know that busy missioner who's always making himself chairman of the Doc Gloom Association when anybody starts a laugh?—the one that's going to Calcutta? Well, he had the nerve . . . You see, you and I've been going around together a good deal."

"What did he say?"

"Well, he asked me when we were going to get married, and I told him when I could patent a mouth-organ as good as his."

"You told him that?"

"Ye-ah. Of course I could have told him to go to hell," William added, gravely.

"You mustn't talk like that—you mustn't."

"I know it; so I didn't. But I thought I'd tell you, so if he speaks to you you can hand him a line of talk that 'll curl his Horace Greeley for him."

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"You must learn to laugh such things away. But don't let that bother you. No silly thing like that shall spoil our friendship. Mercy! it's ten o'clock! time for me to go to bed. To-morrow we sail down the Nile. Isn't it wonderful! Good night."

William went into the garden for a cigar. His school-teacher could be very abrupt at times. He looked up at the sky and down at the river. The night was inexpressibly beautiful, but William's imagination took a mournful turn. Somewhere over there the two old codgers were hiking along, arguing, that is, if they weren't asleep. He had heard vague rumors of men sleeping on the backs of camels, but he doubted it; and he had excellent reasons for doubting it. Hadn't he ridden a camel out to Memphis and back and discovered a new set of muscles that clamored poignantly for recognition?

And this was the same little old creek where they had planted Moses in the bulrushes! Lately he understood why the Decalogue had been given to humanity. Nobody could live in Egypt without it, not if he went tagging around after a dragoon.

And it was strange that that old moon should be working with this old river long after the mold of ten thousand years lay upon his bones. What a speck he was!

"No silly thing like that shall spoil our friendship."

Well, after all, what more could he ask? Hadn't

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he put aside forever that magnificent but foolish dream? In this life the sensible person was he who, when he could not get what he wanted, took what was offered and made the most of it. Friendship? If only dreams had substance, and you could bury them and feel certain that they would stay buried!

When and where would he see that sleek yacht again?

Upon his return to Cairo William found a draft from Burns and a letter bristling with questions and warnings. Another letter informed him that his stolen letter of credit had not yet been offered anywhere, and that a new one would be issued not later than November 10th and forwarded to any city he should designate. Upon the advice of the agent at Cook's he directed the bankers to forward the new letter to Rangoon. A hundred pounds ought easily to carry him to that city. This important business off his mind, he proceeded to enjoy himself with a thoroughness which generally left the girl breathless. It seemed to her that he did not know what fatigue was.

He ran amuck in the amber bazaars, purchasing amber beads, cigar-holders, and pipe-stems in bulk. He explained that he was going to give the beads to the little typewriter in the office, to Mrs. Burns, and to his landlady, and the smokers' articles to the boys in the shop and over at the engine-house.

He had picked up one phrase in Arabic: *Ma andish fulus* means "I have no money." He sang it in tenor, barytone, and bass. If an Arab politely

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said, "Salaam!" William would hurl his phrase into his teeth and pass on. Many reviled him for a dog of a *giaour*, but he brushed aside the curses as he brushed aside the flies, which was ceaselessly during the day. Unwisely, he had begun the first day in Cairo by giving alms. About three hundred beggars from the tombs of the califs now loitered on the curb opposite his hotel, and they loved him as the ladies in "Olivette" loved the whale.

The night previous to the departure for Port Said, where they were to go aboard the *Ajax*, Camden invited William to go to the Théâtre des Nouveautes, where three or four good boxing-bouts were to be held. William threw up his hat. After ten thousand painted saints, and as many cathedrals and tombs, this prospective entertainment was manna in the desert.

But, with the exception of five sovereigns to meet the expenses of the evening, he wisely turned over his money to Ruth; and, ironical as it may seem, this very caution was the cause of his downfall.

"Don't go prowling around after your boxing-match is over," she advised. "This is the last night, and if anything happened to you you would miss the boat."

"I'll never miss it, sister; take it from me."

Camden announced, as they entered the theater, that after the bouts William would have to shift for himself. "I'm off for a rubber or two of bridge at Shepherd's; so you'll have to guide

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yourself back to the hotel. And remember the boat."

"I know the way," replied William.

William knew the return route to his hotel. But he who hesitates is lost, and on the way back William hesitated against his better judgment.

A man had followed him from the theater, and when William became detached from the crowd, the man approached him secretly.

"Would the American gentleman like to see the celebrated Cairene dancers?"

"Not at all," said William.

"Ah, but you do not see Cairo if you miss these dancers. If you have not been to Madame Rene's, you have not seen Cairo, sir."

William, recalling the twenty-one nationalities in the dance-halls of Smyrna's water-front, paused. Had he been carrying a large sum of money he would have gone on instantly. It was a questionable exploit; but, then, he was no prude. He recalled that only this very night Camden had spoken in regret of his inability to see some of the Cairene dancers this trip. William was out to see the world, and a Cairene dance-hall might as well take its place on the program in exchange for some future tomb or ruin.

"Lay on, Macduff; but I tell you what, if these dancers aren't up to the mark, I'll sic Thomas Cook on to you."

He was not very much impressed by the scene at madame's. It was sordid, and William did not like sordid pictures. The dancing girls were even

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less graceful than those ladies in Naples who danced the tarantella in the drawing-rooms of the hotels. Sold! He was certain at last that the skilled barkers at the side-shows home had been born and reared in this part of the world. He kept his eyes open, bought a bottle of cheap wine, but declined to drink it or touch the pasties laid out before him. When he looked around presently and found his guide absent, he got up.

Madame regretted that he was not amused. Nobody made the least attempt to stay him. Indeed, the dancers at once lost interest in him. They invariably lost interest in men who bought one bottle of wine and no more.

To reach Madame Rene's door you had to pass down a dark alley whose single illumination came from a wall-lamp at the corner. It was in this alley that William was struck down.

CHAPTER XIV

THE unmarried woman must have something to satisfy her instincts of motherhood; thus we find the spinster coddling the cat or cooing to the canary. A single man has so many diversions that he need be lonely only during his meals, and not always then. He has no mother instincts; he cannot boast of father instincts before the fact.

Ruth, having finished her breakfast of toast and chocolate, sat cross-legged among the tumbled bed-clothes and analyzed an astonishing discovery. She had found an outlet to the mother instinct by establishing a protectorate over William Grogan. Since the death of her father she had been without any practical objective in life. She loved children, but it was impossible to mother the wild little animals under her tutelage. She never could get very close to them sentimentally, for the reason that teachers are looked upon by pupils as natural enemies. If some little girl made her the gift of a bouquet or some little boy left an apple on her desk, she readily understood the impulse behind the act—a plea for immunity from punishment the next time punishment was due. But to get them snuggling in her arms was nigh impossible.

The majority of them had all the mothering

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they wanted at home. They could put up with it there because they had to; but at school they considered any such advances as an encroachment upon their prerogatives. True, they would come running to her fast enough when they were hurt; but this was in quest of justice or sympathy, and teachers were the only grown-ups at hand.

So she awoke with the discovery that for several weeks, in fact since the landing at Naples, she had been mothering William Grogan, rescuing him from greedy shopkeepers, suppressing his careless generosity in the matter of tips, seeing to it that he never left anything on trains, warning him against sea-food in inland towns, teaching him by degrees what she knew of art and literature despite the fact that most of it went into one ear and out of the other.

Ruth gathered up her brush and comb from the little stand at the side of the bed and began brushing and combing her hair, which was golden-brown like the nest of a ripe chestnut. Her skin was fine and firmly padded, with a hint of gold in the soft, curving shadows. Her cambric night-gown, short in sleeve and loose at the shoulders, revealed vaguely the lovely contours of her young body. But as in William, her chief attraction lay in her eyes, deep gray, flecked with the variegated browns of an October leaf.

Mothering William Grogan with his shock of red hair, his amazing blue eyes, his irrepressible good humor, his irresponsible generosity! She laughed and rocked her body. It was so funny. Argu-

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ing with him what he should and should not spend, ordering him to do this or that, certain that he would always obey her, which he always did. Accustomed as she was to ruling children, it fell to her easily to dominate this Hercules who was only a child grown up. It never occurred to her to peer behind the curtain of this apparent docility. Besides, the experience had all the thrilling exhilaration of stroking a purring tiger; for while she might in time completely forget that morning in Venice, she would never forget the cold, murderous fire in William's eyes.

Eight o'clock! She sprang off the bed, lively and eager. They would be leaving for Port Said at nine-thirty, and she hadn't a bit of packing done. She ran to the window—sunshine, always sunshine. What a wonderful world it was! She began humming the spinning-song from "The Flying Dutchman," and turned to her suit-cases. It was an actual fact that these cases were visibly shrinking or else her clothes were growing. Soon she would be forced to buy a third case.

When everything was snugly packed away and not so much as a hairpin forgotten, she picked up William's little bag of gold and dropped it into the pocket of her skirt, pinning the aperture. Not only his mother, but his banker, too! She laughed. The bag was heavy and clumsy, but, once aboard, she could turn it over to William or the purser.

At eight-thirty she was in the lobby, searching for William. He was nowhere in sight, and she considered this rather unusual. So she found a

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chair in the midst of the confusion and sat down to wait. Her fellow-tourists began to depart in groups. Ten minutes to nine she became worried. Not belonging to that class of women who cannot do anything but wait, she went to the desk to learn if William had left word. He had not.

"Perhaps he has overslept," she suggested.

The clerk looked over the key-rack. "Here is his key, miss."

She thought for a moment. "It might be well to send some one up, at least to see if his luggage has been brought down. It is getting late."

"Very well, miss."

Five minutes later Ruth was informed that Mr. Grogan had not been in his room. His clothes lay about; nothing had been packed. Ruth was now alarmed.

"Give me the key and summon a maid for me," she said, resolutely. She did not care what people said.

She and the maid packed William's grips and carried them down-stairs. It was now ten minutes past nine. She could wait five minutes longer. What had happened? It was certain that he had not returned to the hotel last night. Promptness was one of William's virtues. Never before had she missed him in the morning. A dread thought, thrust it aside as she might, persisted. It did not matter that he was very strong, quick, and resourceful. Each time she shut her eyes she saw a man stealing treacherously up behind him.

At nine-fifteen she was forced to go to her car-

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riage. She dared not wait any longer. There was a possible chance of his arriving at the station the last moment. But there was no William Grogan on the train that left for Port Said that morning.

Her luggage and William's were stacked together in the corridor; and the Calcutta missionary eyed the pyramid gloomily as he passed the compartment.

Ruth imagined all sorts of calamities. William had been run over. He had been set upon and robbed. He was lying in a hospital, and was badly hurt, unable to tell who he was. And he might be dead. She kept up pluckily under the strain. For five and a half hours she sat in her corner stiffly, paying no heed to the calls for luncheon, not daring to close her eyes for fear of the pictures she would see behind the lids, replying absently to such questions as were put to her by the other ladies. What really gave her this fictitious strength was the hope that at Port Said there would be a telegram.

He was so strong that his strength would probably react against him. His assailants would be forced to beat him cruelly in order to plunder him safely. He had promised to return to the hotel immediately after the boxing-match, and no doubt the old craving to prowls had been his undoing.

She wished now that she had remained in Cairo. She could have searched the hospitals, notified the police and the consul. Moreover, she could have taken a late train to Suez and joined the *Ajax*

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there. An explanatory telegram would have held up the ship for an hour or so.

At Port Said there was no telegram awaiting Ruth.

Camden was one of the last to come on board. Ruth rushed up to him.

"Where is Mr. Grogan?"

"Grogan? Why, isn't he on board?"

"No. He didn't come back to the hotel last night."

"Good lord! Why, I left him at the door of the theater. Only a few turns, and he was at his hotel. But I shouldn't worry, Miss Jones." For Ruth was still "Miss Jones" to every one but William. "I say, I'll run down and send some wires, one to the police and one to the hotel. He may not think to take the night express to Suez."

"I'll be very grateful to you. I'm dreadfully worried. He hasn't the least idea what caution is."

"We've half an hour. I'll bring you the receipts for the telegrams." Camden made off.

When the *Ajax* began her slow voyage down the narrow canal, Ruth stood watch until Port Said became an indistinct blur to the north. At midnight she saw the lights of Ismailia approach and pass. The captain, having been apprised of the situation, watched for a signal "passenger to board"; but none came. It was then Ruth went below, but not to sleep, merely to rest her weary body.

At dawn the slithering of the anchor chains

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startled her from a doze. She hastily put on her kimono and went on deck. Suez lay off to starboard. The harbor lights were still shining, though they grew perceptibly dimmer and dimmer as the yellow pallor of dawn changed swiftly into bright gold. A string of coal-lighters were swinging around to port, and hundreds of Arabs swarmed over the dull black heaps of coal. There was in the air the promise of a very hot day.

The *Ajax* had dropped her anchor just outside the basin of Port Ibrahim. In the basin itself was a forest of masts and funnels; and from out the spaces between these hulls came dozens of small boats laden with fruit. Ruth strained her eyes in vain to discover a familiar head. What with the pall of coal-dust, the sharpening yellow haze, and the many heads dully red from the stains of henna, William's aureola would not have shone with any degree of conspicuity.

All hope died within her. If he was not dead he had at least passed out of her life for many months, if not forever. She bent her forehead to the teak rail, cool with dew. If she did not weep it was because her eyes were too dry for tears.

One of her hands lay inertly on the rail. Down upon this hand suddenly fell another, big and warm and firm. It was dirty, variously scratched, and streaked with blood. She looked up swiftly. The object of her fascinated gaze was literally in tatters. His collar was gone, likewise his hat. There was a hideous bump over the left ear, and all the way down the side of the head and neck

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was a broad streak of coagulated blood and coal-dust. The face was as black as a stoker's. Out of this murk appeared two rows of white teeth. She would have known that grin anywhere.

"William Grogan!" she gasped.

"Ye-ah; what's left," jauntily.

CHAPTER XV

WILLIAM never saw the hand that struck him down. Whether he had one or ten assailants was likewise to remain in the limbo of mysteries. He always recollected this adventure with the keenest regret. To sink down under the avalanche, fighting to the last moment, accounting for two or three among the many, was never considered a disgrace by any Irishman William knew. He was proud of his strength, and to pass into the land of coma without being permitted to exercise the functions of his hands and feet was galling to the memory.

As he left Madame Rene's dance-hall, so far as he could see the alley was deserted except for himself. Still, there were a dozen black doorways behind him and beyond. The last thing he remembered, he had taken out his old silver watch, not with any idea of ascertaining the time, but rather in surrender to that mechanical impulse common enough in men—when in doubt, look at your watch. Right there the top of heaven fell out.

Hours must have passed before he finally opened his eyes and sensed realities. The blow had been brutal, and doubtless would have permanently

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cracked a skull less solid. His initial impression was a curious one; he was nothing more than an enormous head, and all the aches known were fighting there for individual supremacy. His second impression was that he was sailing along at the tail of a comet, for no matter which way he looked he saw nothing but showers of sparks. It was when he felt a touch of nausea, thousands of miles away, that he knew for a certainty that his body was still attached to his neck. He attempted to reach up a hand to this freak head, only to learn that he was bound up as snugly as an Italian baby in the winter.

Too weak to struggle, he relaxed and lay back like a sensible but badly punished boxer between rounds. In time the vertigo passed away and slowly his body became normal. But he wisely allowed an hour or more to slip by before he began a serious attempt to free himself.

The damp, musty odor was familiar. He was in some kind of a cellar. A long distance away he was presently able to distinguish a square of dark blue in the jet black. It was a window. He was sitting with his back to a post of stone; he could feel the chill of it against his spine. And the damp of the clay floor penetrated his legs and thighs.

What time was it? Was it still midnight or was it well on toward morning? Before he wasted what little strength he had, he decided to wait for light. After what seemed hours and hours, the square of blue lightened and the velvet blackness

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took on a deep, foggy gray. Morning was approaching.

He now began to struggle. He would swell his muscles, then relax them suddenly, recalling the skill in this direction of a prestidigitator he had once seen at the vaudeville. By the time the outside world had turned yellow he had gained an inch or so at the wrists; but, in opposition to this, the rope had tightened around his elbows. This phenomenon convinced him that he was trussed up in a single coil of rope several yards long. Somewhere, then, there ought to be a weak spot. He rested his arms and began wriggling his feet.

He had lost considerable blood. His left shoulder was damp and soggy with it, and whenever he moved his head his neck burned and the hair pulled. He was grateful for one thing—they had not gagged him; he could get plenty of air into his lungs. But this fact added a new worry to those already accumulated—his captors did not care whether he yelled for help or not. He was dreadfully thirsty. He would have exchanged all his sovereigns for a dipper of cold water.

The four walls of the cellar began to take form, to stand out distinctly, and he could see about. What he saw troubled him. He was an old hand in the psychology of cellars. This was under a deserted house. Where? Was he across the way from Madame Rene's or had he been carried to another part of the town? While the clay was damp, there were no visible signs of moisture. Thus he reasoned that he was nowhere near the Nile.

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By the time it was full morning he could pull one foot up as far as his knee, but beyond that not an inch, nor could he free the foot. The rogues had made a very good job of it.

Naturally there came a period of self-reviling. He had been warned against prowling off by himself at night, especially here on the threshold of the Orient. But he would do it; and here he was, a prisoner with a battered head and a burning thirst. What were they holding him for—ransom? Pity they hadn't broken his fool head completely. . . . The *Ajax*! He sucked in his cheeks for a bit of saliva. The *Ajax* was sailing at three that afternoon, and from the looks of things it was going to sail without William Grogan. He forgot his caution, forgot how little strength he possessed, and fought his bonds as a tiger fights the hunting-net. Snarling and cursing, he sawed his feet and pulled at his wrists. He desisted quickly enough. The sparks began to fly again and the full flood of pain returned. He sank back against the pillar, gasping.

"What a fool! What a fool!"

He had promised Ruth faithfully to return to the hotel as soon as the fights were over. He had broken his promise; and she was all alone. He began hiccoughing, as much in rage as in pain.

Far above a door closed carelessly. William raised his head, listening tensely and trying to strangle the hiccoughs. But the sound of footsteps did not follow the banging of the door. It might have been the wind. Yet, even as he was about

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to accept this as a solution, the door leading into the cellar swung on its stiff hinges and a small Arab boy came down the stone steps. He wore a kind of smock, ragged and dirty; his legs and feet were bare, and probably had been since the hour of his birth. Perched rakishly on the top of his shaven poll was a dilapidated fez minus the tassel, the stem of which stood up like that of an apple. He was sore-eyed but flyless, his particular bevy of flies having rebelled, doubtless, against the possibility of being immured in darkness. The Cairo fly is a firm believer in sunshine.

The boy carried a loaf of bread under one arm and a water-jar under the other. The water-jar was like those William had often admired on the heads of the graceful balancing Egyptian women. The boy approached William and stared; his glance was neither bold nor timorous, only mildly curious. The boy looked at him quite as William would have looked at a strange fish in the Battery Aquarium at home. Having satisfied his eyes, the boy nonchalantly dropped the bread to the ground and held the water-jar against William's swollen lips. William drank like a spent race-horse. Next the boy offered the bread, but William shook his head.

"Speak English?" he demanded, thickly.

The boy dropped the bread again, rose and walked to the stairs, which he began to mount. He could not have worn a more stolid expression had he been deaf and dumb.

"Hey, come back here!"

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The boy disappeared. Later the street door banged.

"Well, what do you know about that?" asked William, addressing his shoes. "Not a sound out of him! Not a blink! Well, it's up to me to climb out of this and climb quick. . . . Hell!" he cried as a stabbing pain pierced his eyes.

The window was eight feet above the floor. In a corner stood a smoothly worn plank of teakwood, which had evidently been used as a chute for boxes or bales from the outside, perhaps cotton bales, as there were tufts of cotton here and there about the corners. From this point of view this was a complete inventory. William hitched sideways; the other half of the cellar was as bare as his palm. But in turning he made a discovery which at the time suggested nothing—a spike in the stone pillar, a foot above his head. The outlook was not at all promising. His jailers would probably keep him confined until night, when they might safely liberate him—that is, if it was not ransom. Well, they hadn't struck much oil, and wouldn't. Four sovereigns and a watch which had two values, sentimental and intrinsic, one hundred minus ninety-eight, if you reckoned pawnbroker style; for two dollars marked the high-water rate of exchange at Uncle Mose Cohen's over on Eighth Avenue.

Bang! It was the outer door again. The boy returned with two Syrian oranges. He squatted at William's side, split the fruit, and solemnly poked the scarlet slices into the yawning mouth

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eager to receive them. When the oranges had vanished, the boy tilted the water-jar scientifically and William was no longer thirsty. But he lowered his head suggestively. The boy understood the movement, for he sluiced William's head generously.

"You're the real Samaritan, all right, boy. And when you go to Paradise I hope they'll give you a harem two blocks long."

In return for this excellent wish the boy, without the least sign of greediness, proceeded to rifle William's pockets; and he was as thorough as a German chemist. The result of this immoral procedure was a penknife, the key to William's steamer trunk, two double piasters from a vest pocket which had been overlooked by the boy's elders, four receipted hotel bills, and a picture post-card. The boy tucked these ill-gotten gains under his fez and sprang up.

This was too much for William's risibles. He chuckled.

"In business for yourself, huh? Well, you're welcome. Going? Take care of yourself. Anyhow, I guess you've saved one Irishman's life."

Alone once more, he renewed his efforts to loosen the rope. Again he was forced to give up. After this he fell asleep. The banging of kettledrums and the mournful wailing of reeds awoke him. The sounds passed and dwindled. He heard the bleating protest of a camel. The angle of sunshine appalled him. It must be somewhere around five o'clock in the afternoon. He had slept the major

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part of the day. The *Ajax* was already on its way down to the Red Sea.

He sidled toward the water-jar, wondering if he could get a drink without wasting the precious fluid. His tongue was hot with fever again. Chance directed his gaze toward the spike in the pillar, and this time an idea was born. If he could manage to get his wrists on the level with that spike. . . .

It was an arduous task. After half an hour spent in wriggling and twisting and balancing, he gained his feet. Then he leaned toward the spike and began carefully to work the knot against it. An hour later he kicked the rope off his feet.

He knew better than to rush to the window immediately. He needed life in his tingling legs and arms. Yet, he hadn't much time. The boy or his elders might now return at any moment. He drank deeply, ate some bread, took out his handkerchief (which the boy had ignored for lack of understanding), and bathed the cut. Despite this refreshment, he felt weak and dizzy.

He then proceeded to place the chute against the window-ledge, crawled up with infinite labor, and wormed himself through. As he rose to his feet he heard the shrill whistle of a railway engine. He could not have asked for a more timely bit of aid. He started off in the direction of this glorious whistle at a shambling trot. His progress resembled that of a drunken man, for he was growing more and more light-headed. But he stuck to it doggedly. The houses careened at times, and the

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dusty road had a peculiar way of sinking and rising like the waves of the sea.

He was in the native quarters; but none hindered his advance. They knew, these experienced brown men, that it was not wise to trifle with red-headed drunken men. Some children tagged along at his heels, however, shrilling insults and ribald jests, knowing themselves to be immune from any attack more serious than a chance smack of the hand or a boot's end. By and by they desisted; the sport was too tame. I doubt if William saw or heard them.

He had picked out a spot in the sky and was marching toward the world directly under it. That whistle had come out of there somewhere, and nothing should deter him from reaching that somewhere. A wild compass to steer by. He had neither sea-lore nor wood-lore; he had not the least comprehension of what a range meant, yet he found the railway.

When he came around to a clear understanding of time and place—for he had made this remarkable journey in a semi-delirious condition—the night wind was roaring in his face and ears, and the desert, endless reaches of dull silver under the touch of moonshine, was racing past. He was crouching among the heavy folds of canvas which partially covered a box-car in a long goods-train, speeding in what direction only God knew.

At four o'clock in the morning the train drew into a small town and thence out onto a long cement pier south of which lay a broad stretch of

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water. There were many ships at anchor. Thus, by the kindly grace of God, who watches over fools, drunken men, and particularly lovers, William had reached the port of his heart's desire, Suez.

After making several inquiries, he found the coal-lighters were in readiness to move out the moment the *Ajax* dropped off Port Ibrahim. He went aboard one of these. The Arabs did not molest him. Quite within reason they thought he was some drunken stoker who had lost his ship at Port Said. He certainly looked disreputable enough.

When he saw the *Ajax* slip out of the canal, when he heard the metallic music of her chains, he laid his dizzy head upon his knees. It seemed almost impossible that he had accomplished it. There was a big gap. He could remember nothing from the moment he had left his prison until he sensed his surroundings aboard the goods-train.

"Sister," he murmured, "but for you I'd never have made it, believe me! Maybe God ain't good to one red-headed Mick! Now, who's this man Orestes who was with Colburton that night in Venice? That's the guy I'm looking for."

CHAPTER XVI

"AND that's what happened, sister," he said, later. "It can't be done, it can't be done. I'm going along with the *Ajax*, and that's all there is to it."

"I could shake you!" she cried, hysterically.

"Don't try it, sister; I'm not stuck together very well this morning."

"I knew you'd been hurt; and once I was sure that you were dead. How I have worried! You deserve a shaking," she repeated. It was a case of talk or cry.

"Believe me, I got the shaking all right."

"Your poor head!"

"Some little old good-night sign they hung on me—huh?"

"But you promised me—"

"Guilty as charged! And, say, of all the punk dancing I ever saw, those dames beat the clock! There used to be a bear out at the Bronx; he had the rheumatism, and for a peanut he'd dance those skirts to a standstill. Now, don't you worry about my head. It's solid ivory. But I wish you could have seen the Arab kid frisk my pockets. It was worth two dollars a seat, standing room only. The little rat never batted an eye-winker. Well,

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no more prowling alone at night. That goes. Now you toddle along to your bunk. I'm going for a wash-up. Gee! When I think of what I'm going to do to that cake of soap! I'll have the doc fix the cut."

"I still don't understand how you got here."

"Well, I'll tell you how the day you tell me what I've got that scholars haven't"; and before she could frame a reply he had disappeared into the companionway.

After the bath the doctor took six stitches in the cut and ordered William to stay in his berth until late in the afternoon. So when he came on deck at tea-time the *Ajax* was well down into the Red Sea. He was mildly disappointed, and he complained to Ruth over their tea-cups. There was no change in the color of the water. It might have been different in Biblical times, but there was no license for calling it red in the year nineteen-twelve. All this nonsense cheered Ruth. Apparently nothing could crush or depress the dynamic spirit of this adopted brother of hers. To be able to joke after all he had gone through!

She pondered over the whimsy of fate that had brought William's path parallel and adjacent to her own. A beautiful natural friendship like this, to bud and blossom out of a pair of shoes, her own, flitting day by day past his cellar window! It read like a fairy-story. A beautiful friendship because it was based upon protection and confidence, the very keystone of friendship.

Scarcely half a dozen passengers had heard of

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William's adventure; and their knowledge did not extend beyond the vague information that he had been set upon and robbed. That he had not come aboard at Port Said none suspected. Only Ruth, Camden, and the ship's officers had this side of the tale. Except for a bit of swelling and a dull-red mark against the lighter red of his hair, he struck the casual eye as being normal as usual.

Camden, because the weather was thick and hot, decided to remain below until near sunset. He had the steward put out a chair on the main deck, under his port, and all day long he loafed there in his pajamas and bath-robe, smoking and reading. When the steward came and asked him if he would be wanting tea, Camden declared that he would dress and go above for that.

At quarter after five he went into the smoke-room and had his tea there. He was reading from a bundle of American newspapers, reviewing the big league standings, when he felt the springs of the lounge bound. He looked around to behold an amiably grinning ghost.

"Where the devil did you come from?" Camden demanded. "I thought we'd lost you. I told you to go straight back to your hotel last night. Miss Jones has been frantic. Well, what happened?"

"I followed a man."

"No doubt; and got that beautiful crack on the side of the head."

"And all he got was about four sovereigns. Yea, bo!"

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"You didn't have your money with you?"

"Nope. Say, but the Irish are lucky. They can't beat us for luck. There's been a jinx hanging around me for months. It's like this. Two or three years ago I got mixed up in a Black Hand row. Sent 'em up the river. But some of their friends kept tab on me, and these wops laid for me in Naples, Florence, in Rome. Ye-ah. But here's William Grogan, large as life. They finally got to my letter of credit. Naples. They tried the game once in mid-Atlantic. And I never suspected it was a wop that jumped me that night. But they didn't get the pink book with my signature. In Rangoon a new one will be waiting for me at Cook's."

"And so you think you've laid the jinx?"

"Well, it begins to look like it."

"Didn't you tell me you knew the way back to the hotel?"

"And so I did. But I was invited to Madame Rene's soo-ary—the light fantastic, very light—and I went. And then somebody hit me on the bean with a gas-pipe."

"They rooked you, of course."

"Well, you might call it petty larceny. I had only four sovereigns and an old silver watch. So I guess the joke was on them. Caught a freight from Cairo to Suez. Bunged up a little, but nothing to speak of."

Camden folded his papers. "Grogan, I'll split a pint of wine."

"Wine? Nothing doing."

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"Might as well. Not a soul on board will believe you weren't off on a bender."

"Let 'em believe."

"Well, one thing is certain—you need a guardian."

"Maybe I've got one."

"Sure enough—Irish luck. You're a wonder. I know this part of the world. Not one man in a thousand would have got out of that hole."

"I had to get out," said William, gravely.

"Tell me the whole adventure."

William was agreeable. It was all a huge joke to him, of the kind he took a good deal of pleasure in telling. "But that Arab kid!" he concluded, tenderly rubbing his head. "I wish you could have seen his fiz. Mrs. Sphinx was his grandmother, take it from me."

"You won't split a bottle?"

"Nope. I take my Catawbas with the skins on."

"That reminds me. A man doesn't like to refer to those lapses where he behaves like a fool. You played the Good Samaritan that night in Brindisi. Thanks. Grogan, the truth is, I travel to keep away from New York. There I'm lost: too many friends. When I'm at sea I get away from it all and kind of get a grip on life again. You understand?"

"Sure. And so I won't drink with you. There's nothing to it."

"Nothing in this wide world," Camden agreed, staring at the floor.

It was at Aden. Camden was leaving the *Ajax*

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at that modified hell on the bleak Arabian shore. The *Ajax* did not drop her anchor; she simply stopped her engines and drifted slowly. Only three passengers were to disembark, Camden and two British officers who had come aboard at Port Said. The sun was just up. William wore only his pajamas and bath-robe; he had been sleeping on deck.

"Good-by and good luck," he said, as Camden started down the ladder.

"So long, Orestes; take care of yourself," called back Camden as he stepped in among the Arab boatmen.

And the deed was done, the veil rent. The short hair at the base of William's neck stood out like the hair on the back of a dog in the fighting-pit. Orestes! The grin on his lips suffered a temporary petrification which lasted until the Arab oarsmen were well under way. The jackal! Camden waved his hand airily. William replied with a menacing fist; but Camden was too far away to appreciate the significance of that gesture.

CHAPTER XVII

CAMDEN, blissfully unconscious that he had let the cat out of the bag, landed at the jetty. It was early morning, yet the heat was already excessive and enervating.

"Mr. Camden!"

Camden turned to find Norton Colburton's Japanese valet at his elbow.

"Hello, Saki! Where's your master?"

"He iss at the offissers' club, and wants to see you at once, sar."

"Where's the yacht?"

"Back at ten o'clock, sar."

"All right. Nort is up pretty early for him."

The valet shrugged. His master got up early or he got up late, it was all the same to him.

Camden barked some words to his Arab boatmen—he had a traveler's smattering of half a dozen tongues—and proceeded into town. At seven-thirty he rapped on the door of Colburton's room at the officers' club and was bidden to enter.

Colburton was in pajamas and sandals, and he was sipping tea.

"Glad to see you, Dick." He waved his hand toward a chair. "Haven't been to bed yet."

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Bridge all night. Well, what's the news from the good ship *Ajax*?"

Camden lighted a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "Punk, if you want to know. The Irishman turned up at Suez. Not one man in ten thousand would have got out of the hole I put him in. I warned you in Venice."

"You were probably off on your old trick—champagne. Camden, while you're at work for me you cut out that or I'll drop you."

Camden's eyes narrowed. It might have been the smoke of his cigarette. "When you called me up in June and gave me that photograph, I kept away from the stuff. Believe it or not. I combed New York with a fine-tooth comb. Knowing that she went to the movies, I patronized them until my eyes began to fail. Never saw her. I hunted up all the school-teachers who knew her. Not a crumb. I tried the branch post-office, with barren results. Finally I happened to think of the school commissioners. That was the last chance. Here luck was with me. She was not sure that she would teach in the fall term. I told them I was a lawyer and that there was a small legacy. They gave me her new address. When I got there she was gone. She had gone that afternoon. The landlady didn't know where she had gone. Anyhow, she wasn't coming back. I asked to see the room she had vacated. Here I was detective. On the floor of that room I found a crumpled ship's label—the *Ajax*. I left. Later I learned that the *Ajax* was making a tour of the world and

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would sail the following afternoon. I took a chance. Two grips were all I had. I saw her go up the gang-plank. All pretty work, if you want my opinion. Late that night I sent a wireless to you."

"Any detective could have done that for a hundred, and I gave you two thousand as a starter, another thousand in Venice, with the promise of five at the end of the run. And you couldn't even get the best of a red-headed Irishman who ought to have been clay in your hands."

"There are various kinds of clay," replied Camden, moodily. "I tell you, this Gerry Owen is out of the ordinary. He's as strong as a lion. He was born and brought up on the streets, which is to say he's no man's fool. I stole his letter of credit. I set thugs upon him in Rome and Florence; I packed him away with a broken head in Cairo; and he bade me good-by from the starboard rail this morning. To this hour I don't know whether he suspects me or not. I've used every kind of a trap to pump him, and never got a drop. He's watching over that girl. He's in love with her."

Colburton got up and began to pace the room; but this activity proved too much for him, and he sat down abruptly.

"Better call it off," suggested Camden.

"You have never known me to steer off, have you?"

"No, Orestes, I have not; and some day you're going to get bumped hard. Keep your hair on.

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We grew up together; but you were hard and I was soft. You never let cards and wine get the best of you, nor any woman, for that matter. Devil a bit do I care which way it goes; I'll go on with it. I need money. And the job you offer me is the only kind left for a polecat like myself."

"Moralizing, eh?"

"No, I used to moralize. I do still when I've just got over a bender. Bad as I am, there's a white corner or two sticking around in my soul; and I don't like the looks of this deal. It doesn't look successful."

"Leave that end of it to me. I'll break your Gerry Owen, and then I'll break the girl. Break her like that!" Colburton closed his fists and struck them against his knees.

"Then you only want to break her?" asked the jackal, curiously. "You're not mad about her any more, then?"

"What's that to you?"

"Nothing, m' lord, nothing. But you might lower your tone a little. I don't like it."

Colburton plucked at his mustache. "Has she made any attempt to dispose of it?"

"No. She's a woman. She's probably deathly afraid by now. What 'll I do to Grogan?"

"Leave h m to me. The yacht will be off the jetty at ten. You go aboard of her. You'll find your trunks in your old cabin. We go straight to Ceylon. From there to Perak, where I'm going to do a little hunting."

"That's a long time to wait."

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Colburton drank his tea. "Want some?"

"Had my breakfast on board." Camden smiled at the other's sudden conciliatory mood. So long as this Pied Piper of Petticoat Lane had use for him, there was no need to worry about the immediate future. Besides, he had an idea. If it worked out he could go on his own for several years to come. "When will you come aboard the *Elsa*?"

"About four. Some officers are coming. There'll be bridge. I'll drop out after dinner and you can play a few rubbers. They're a reckless lot. Sixpence a point."

"Thanks for the manna. It pleases me to know that you know I'm not a crook with cards, only skilful. Well, I'll see you at four. What are your plans?"

"I'm mulling them over now. I want her to believe I've given up. I'll let her have October and November. She'll grow careless. I'll fix your Irishman."

"I'll do my share, but it's got to be a plausible trick, Orestes, a plausible trick. The way that man Grogan hovers around that girl is an illumination. He knows that something's wrong, that she's in danger, though he doesn't know what it is."

"I ran into him in Venice," said Colburton, coldly. "I'm glad you tell me he's in love with her. If you can twist a man's heart, it's better than twisting his bones."

Camden departed. Poor Grogan! It was not

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possible that he should slip through every trap. Sooner or later, he would have to pay dearly for his devotion. For Camden could not get away from the fact that he liked the Irishman. Supposing he surrendered to the impulse to clear out? Within six months' time he would be absolutely penniless, living in some cheap boarding-house which would automatically grow cheaper as the days went by. His good clothes and his jewels would be in pawn. . . . No use. He was no good; it was too late now even if he wanted earnestly to be good. He was too deeply in the web. It was written; he would have to go on to the end. He would probably die alone in some Oriental rat-hole.

Camden laughed suddenly. There was a chance for him, if he played his cards carefully. It was worth trying. It was, in truth, his main reason for accepting this equivocal adventure.

Midnight.

The *Elsa* tugged at her cables. Somewhere out in the Indian Ocean a great storm was running. Colburton's guests had returned to the town, and he sat alone among the empty bottles and scattered cards. The little silk curtains over the open ports flapped and snapped. Outside, the davits creaked, now to starboard, now to port.

The saloon was richly furnished. It served both as dining-room and lounge during rough weather. Port and starboard ran low book-shelves, and there were several hundred books in exquisite

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hides. But not one of them appeared thumbed, beloved. On this yacht books had never been a source of amusement, they had never been reckoned as friends; they went with the teak, the gilt, and the Persian rugs. Your real library should be haunted by friendly ghosts; but if there were any ghosts in this one, they were still tight in their tombs. This was a pleasure yacht which the present owner had inherited six years before.

Over the mantel was the portrait of an elderly man. The artist had done what he could to soften the face; but because he was an artist one saw the money-changer in the Temple in the cold, thin lips and repellent eyes. At the other end of the saloon, over the sideboard, was the portrait of a woman. This, too, had been idealized; yet even so one caught the emptiness of the eyes, the vanity and selfishness in the droop of the lips. One was the father and the other was the mother of the young man below.

But he was an old young man. You might have computed his age in eons instead of years. He was thirty-five; and a man should be really young at that age. He was well built, quite graceful when he moved, and undeniably handsome—that is, if you weren't specialized in physiognomy. His eyes were like his father's; but the mother lips of him were hidden under a well-turned mustache.

Norton Colburton was what his parents had made him. We all are, more or less. There is no reason why our immediate progenitors should not

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be forced to carry some of the burden. A cold-blooded, money-making father on one side and a vain, dissatisfied pleasure-loving mother on the other, it followed naturally that these attributes should combine in the offspring. The old man had roared and cursed at the son, and the mother had pampered him. The boy had afforded the parents a mutual ground for quarreling. They never met that they did not wrangle over him. Not that they cared particularly whether he went wrong or right, but because the elder Colburton hated his wife and was despised by her. A man with the soul of David might have come through this unscathed; but the younger Colburton had the soul of a Jacob, always ready to exchange a mess of pottage for a birthright.

All alone now, free of all manner of leashes, he was proud of his riches and the power they gave him. He was an unfettered king. He had absolute freedom. He had millions which would not fritter away, no matter how deeply he plunged his hands into them. All doors opened at a nod from his head, and a gesture scattered obstacles as the north winds scatter the dead leaves of autumn. To wish was to have, which is not a good thing for any man.

Norton Colburton had never done a kindness without some ulterior purpose, always negative so far as goodness was concerned. Women were a source of pleasure and amusement. That they had been predestined to bring up sons straight and clean was an idea which lay unformative in his

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mind. He never saw in any of his dreams, a William Grogan saw in his, a home, a garden, a wife, and a couple of kids.

As he smoked his pipe, his eyes half closed, he smiled from time to time. By and by he laughed outright and summoned his valet.

"Cable blanks," he said. He wrote: "Cook Rangoon. Forward all mail Bombay office at once." He signed this cable—"William Grogan."

Then he went to bed.

CHAPTER XVIII

WILLIAM found it hard to resist the desire to leap the rail, swim out to Camden, and throttle him. He might have done so but for one thing. Aden was English. Recently he had heard something about the immutability of the English law. If you killed a man in cold blood they really made you pay the penalty, these Britishers. It did not matter a continental whoop how many dollars and lawyers you could mobilize; if they found you guilty you paid the penalty. You couldn't lug in brain-storms, alienists, and handwriting experts, appeal from court to court until for very weariness some jury would let you go. No; these Britishers hanged you or sent you to penal servitude for life, and no back talk.

So William did not jump overboard. They would have locked him up in Aden, tried him, and hanged him. Under such conditions the death of Camden would benefit no one but Colburton, who might be pleased to hear of the death of his jackal. Besides, William saw another side of the square: he hadn't a shred of real evidence against Camden, he had only suppositions. He knew, but the law would not be able to recognize what he knew as evidence.

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There was not a shadow of doubt in his mind; everything now dovetailed so nicely. For what reason had Camden stolen his wallet, his letter of credit, set rogues upon him in Rome and Florence and Cairo? To put him out of the way so as to leave Ruth without protection. No one on board the *Ajax* would have bothered to watch over her.

Orestes! Just a little word like that to rend the veil completely. From under the ports of the yacht *Elsa* he had heard that name, and Camden himself had spoken it. Hadn't Camden's voice been familiar yet unplaceable? And yet, day after day, they had been together, and the man's voice had awakened no recollection. William's pride in his ability to reduce complexities into simplicities, after the fashion of his favorite detectives, had received a rude buffet.

"You scum! If I wasn't the biggest boob that ever wore a collar, you wouldn't be in that boat, standing up. Laughing behind my back all these weeks, and nearly getting me in Cairo. Orestes, huh? You wait; I've got a trick yet. You're going away without knowing I know, and there's where I'm going to get you when the time comes. And when I get through with you and your master, neither of you'll ever bother another woman. Scum!"

He had often heard and read of men like Colburton, but he had not credited their actual existence. William knew the man as a hunter of women, but that he would let his fancy lead him around the world was a revelation as to what

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lengths such men would go in pursuit of their mad pleasures.

William sloughed off a considerable quantity of veneer that morning. He wanted to beat something, crush and pound. A deck-hand accidentally bumped against him, and William turned upon him with a snarl so baldly savage that the poor devil jumped back, spilling his bucket.

"Beg pardon, sir; beg pardon!"

"Look where you're going!"

William, realizing that he must find something upon which to vent his rage, opened the door to the gymnasium, threw aside his bath-robe, and began hammering the bag. For half an hour the thunder of it could be heard all over the deck.

It was childish; no one would grant that more readily than William himself. Not half a dozen times in his life had such murderous rage laid hold of him. So it was far better to rid himself of it in this childish manner than to carry it around simmering in his heart. By the time he had got out of his tub he was normal enough to feel ashamed of himself.

He would say nothing to Ruth. Why worry her? She believed—or at least she pretended to believe—that that chapter in her life had been turned down. And it was his self-appointed task to see that it remained turned down. But in failing to disclose his discovery to Ruth he made a terrible mistake, one which was to cause him ten days of the most indescribable misery he was ever to know.

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Later, when Ruth came up, she saw nothing amiss. She put her usual questions perfunctorily. Had he slept well? Did the pain bother him during the night? For all that the cut had healed quickly and healthily, William was subjected occasionally to splitting headaches, a sign indicative that he had come out of that affair in Cairo by a very narrow margin.

"So Mr. Camden has really left us?" she said, lying back lazily, grateful for the shade of the deck canopy. "He was rather amusing at times."

"Ye-ah." A growl.

"He was well informed about this part of the world."

"Ye-ah." A little louder.

"He left a dozen books for me. Maeterlinck—think of it! Very nice of him, wasn't it?"

"Ye-ah!" A real bark.

"What's the matter?"

"Matter?"

"Ye-ah," she mimicked. "Can't you say 'uh-huh' for a change?"

William did not want to laugh. At the mention of Camden all the early fury returned. He knew his Irish temperament; if he laughed his anger would go by the board; and his mood now was one which found a melancholy pleasure in fanning the coals of hate to keep them alive against the day when he and Camden met again. But there was this that worried him: his gray-eyed school-teacher could see like a cat in the dark; and if once she sensed anything wrong, her questions might

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become embarrassing. So he compromised by forcing a grin.

"I guess you can't teach old dogs new tricks. I never knew there was a word called 'yes' until it was too late to do any good. But I don't say 'uh-huh' as much as I used to. 'S that right? And, anyhow 'ye-ah' is Elijah stuff boiled down."

"Elijah stuff!"

He sighed relievedly. She was off the Camden line, and that was something gained. "Sure it's Elijah stuff. Wasn't he always hitting the trail with 'Yea, verily'?"

"I'm beginning to believe you wouldn't please me at all if you didn't use colloquialisms once in a while. Away out here there's something back-homey about them. The Indian Ocean, Arabia! That Red Sea was very hot."

"If they'd call it the Red-hot Sea I could understand what they meant. I've been leaving a trail of fat wherever I moved. Look at the clothes I'm wearing. I never thought to buy real summer stuff. They're beginning to have their first snow-storms in little New York. Say, what do you think? Thanksgiving in Delhi, and not a pumpkin within ten thousand miles."

"Honest?"

"Honest Injun. And Christmas in Hong-Kong, and everything out of tin cans. Yea, verily, I'm going to be homesick along about that time, believe me, sister."

"Christmas! I feel cooler already."

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Four deck-hands appeared at a run. They began working at the canvas canopy.

"What's the trouble?" demanded William, getting up.

"Orders to lash everything, sir. Blow coming up fast out of the sou'east, sir."

William and Ruth ran to the starboard rail and stared at the great evil pall of blue-black clouds pouring up over the eastern horizon. The face of the waters changed even as they gazed.

"A storm!" she cried.

"Well, Cook can't soak us extra for that," said William.

Ruth ran back to the chairs and gathered up the rugs, pillows, and books, piling them into William's outstretched arms. "Hurry!"

The companionway was jammed with excited tourists. William heard "typhoon" and "tornado" and "hurricane"; and one of the missionaries began to recount a previous adventure of his in which the ship went down, and was only too happy to go into details. William surged toward him, hoping to get within range of the fool's shins. But the second officer spoke up loudly. Typhoon was all nonsense; only a stiffish blow was coming and would probably be over in an hour or two.

William was not satisfied, however. He knew where he could get the truth; and so he started for the chief engineer's cabin. But as he encountered that officer in the act of descending to the engine-room, his official drill exchanged for greasy dunga-

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rees, William comprehended that he and his fellow-voyagers were in for some excitement.

"A blow?"

"Aye, and a hell of a one, too, if I know anything about these dirty waters. This blow is a thousand miles from home, Mr. Grogan; and I don't like its looks. It's Chinese, and we're just off the coast of Araby. Y' never can tell what's in the egg when y' turn the point at Aden. Oh, there's no real danger. She'll pitch a lot and the stewards 'll be busy with their yellow basins. But it's me and the captain without relief as long as it lasts; twenty hours for me in yon hell-hole, mayhap. Can't ask you to come down, Mr. Grogan. Good luck to your lunch—if you've got the gall to eat it!"

William stole back to the smoke-room. It was deserted. Then he remembered that he could see little or nothing from this point; so he went forward to the ladies' saloon. That, too, was deserted. Rugs and pillows and books and baskets of fruit lay strewn about. He knelt on the lounge under a forward port and peered out. It was almost as black as night outside; but the sea was green and terrible. Suddenly he sensed a shiver; it seemed to come from the very bowels of the ship, as if she had become a living thing, sensing her trap. Shortly after this he heard a sound which reminded him of rubbing resined fingers over the top of a deep glass tumbler. This piercing hum rang in his ears intermittently hours after the storm was over.

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There was no pitching in the beginning; the wind bore down too powerfully for that. It lashed the water into ribbons of spume, however. He heard a crack like a pistol-shot. The canvas had been ripped off one of the life-boats. For a moment or two it clung to a davit, then whirled seaward like a gray bird of evil omen.

Strange thing, there was not the least fear in William's heart. On the contrary, he was filled with the wildest exultation he had ever known. He longed to go outside, to lay against that wind and laugh and shout and sing.

Over the starboard bow—for they were going into the gale almost head-on—rose a thin sheet of water, so thin that William could see through it. It hung in mid-air for two or three seconds—a viper seeking for something to strike—then smashed upon the deck. He knew instantly where he had heard that sound before—when they sent sheet-tin down the cellar chute at the shop.

The shop! How unutterably far off that was! Wasn't that all a piece of a humdrum dream? Could he ever return and settle down? Never had he felt so keenly and wonderfully alive as at this moment.

The bow of the *Ajax* went down, down, down, fathoms down. From the dining-saloon came the racket of crashing dishes. The potted palm on the piano fell with a crash. William laughed. Then the bow of the *Ajax* went up, up, up. He had to hang to the grip of the port to keep from sliding off his perch. The ship did not fall far

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this time. She struck a roller a thousand years old, and tons and tons of green water rushed over the deck. A forgotten magazine swam about frantically but hopelessly. It fluttered like a wounded gull against a boat-block, then slumped overboard. William chuckled. Inanimate things did not have much show. But a man, now! He was letting himself be carried along by the elemental and irresistible desire to escape this stuffy cabin and to see if he could stand up under that smashing wind and wave. To get out there and fight, to yell back at that infernal bell-like humming! Chinese, was it? Well, he'd like to show the old pigtail that William Grogan was no milk-sop.

The *Ajax* began to plunge heavily. William's fancy had made the ship a living thing, and she was fighting. Each time a great monster threatened to engulf her she slammed down her steel forefoot and split it, broke it, shattered it.

"Go it, old girl! Beat 'em down, smash 'em! Don't let 'em bluff you; soak it to 'em! Tha's a girl! Show 'em up! Tell 'em you're from little ol' New York, where they have to show you. Tha's a girl! Wow!"

He had forgotten Camden, he had forgotten Ruth; there was nothing left in the world at all but himself and the storm. He slipped off the lounge and flung his hat to the floor; the ancient Celt was sticking out all over him. He staggered to the port door. This was in the lee, but as he opened it the blast took away his breath. He did

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not hear the steward's yell of warning, and he wouldn't have minded if he had. It took all his strength—twofold in this mad hour—to shut the door. He hung on to the knob—he had to.

"God! but this tastes good!"

He shifted his grip from the knob to the hand-rail which ran around the deck-houses and began to pull himself forward, all the while ankle-deep in the back-wash. The whole world was green, the sky and the sea, green like emeralds, green like the horse-chestnuts in the spring, and the white-caps were the blossoms.

From all directions came the crackling and slapping of canvas. The mysterious hum had now deepened. It took William's memory back to the Italian cathedrals where priests or choir-boys were eternally intoning. There was also an under-tone, but this was due to the vibrating wires and cables; the great diapason was the wind itself.

Some chairs had broken loose from their lashing on the starboard side, and a tangle of sticks and cane bottoms swirled about at the junction of the cross and port rails, for the deck was now constantly flooded.

William continued to pull himself along. He turned the corner finally. The full wind caught him and slammed him violently against the deck-house. His solid meat and bone were like so much straw. The impact knocked the breath out of him, and he clung to the hand-rail, gasping. He

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battled in vain to turn his face to windward; each attempt left him blind and breathless. His strength was of paper. The swoop of the wind sucked the air out of his lungs—zip!—like that; and he had to bury his face in the crook of his arm to get anything like a full breath. He was beaten, beaten at the start, and he knew it. And yet he laughed. His body was weak, yes, but God Himself had not loosed the wind that could put fear into the heart of William Grogan.

He slipped around again to leeward, where he took in deep, sobbing breaths. His lungs stung as in zero weather after a hard run for a street-car. He was drenched, too. Forward there was a ceaseless volleying of deluges, and when they struck they hurt.

"You win!" he cried, strangling and laughing. "I can lick my weight in wildcats and near-champions, but I know the real article when I see it. Zowie!"

But he had felt the tempest in the roots of his hair, and that was what he had come out for. He was never going to be bothered with headaches again. If he could get to the rear of the smoke-room there might be a chance to see what was going on without risking his life. He made the distance without mishap. Midway aft the deck-houses there was but little wind. He shook himself and wiped the water out of his eyes. Once more he laughed. Only an hour or so back there had not been a ripple on the oily swells, and now all hell seemed broken loose.

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After a short rest he manœuvered around the starboard end, into the teeth of the storm again . . . and paused, doubting his eyes.

A dozen feet away was a woman in white. She lay against the deck-house, wind-driven, her arms wound around the hand-rail. Her tawny hair was blowing straight out behind her, though many strands of it seemed glued to the white panels. She had the appearance of one of those Italian bas-reliefs, for every line of her body was drawn clearly under the soaking, clinging linen. A witch, a mermaid, or a good old Irish banshee! Evidently she dared not let go.

Sea after sea broke forward. The infernal mingling of titanic noises—the snapping of canvas, the roaring ventilators, the doors forward and aft banging monotonously, the rumbling of the steam, the convulsive creaking shudder of the ship as the screws flung themselves free of the water, and the immensity of that great, humming m-m-m-m!—it was hell without brimstone.

The only thing that saved the girl from suffocation was the projection of the middle saloon. This broke the density and volume of the waves. Nevertheless, sheet after sheet slapped against her body resoundingly. She had probably come out for a forgotten book or rug, he thought. The little fool!

“Creep back, and don’t let go that hand-rail! Do just as I tell you!” he yelled; but the gale drove the words back into his throat. The bellow of a Cyclops would not have reached the girl’s

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ears understandingly. There was nothing for it but to go after her. He put his free arm around her. Then she turned. It was Ruth, and she was laughing! "Good God!"

The fear for her safety turned him into something of a brute. That she should dare risk her life like this in play! A strong man had some chance, but a woman none. The rescue—for no doubt it was a rescue—had none of those niceties which made certain mid-Victorian chapters memorable. William was simply the caveman, and Ruth was his woman, and the deluge was reaching out for her. That he did not take her by the hair was because his grip on her body was sufficient. He knew that his strength, multiplied many times by terror and rage, was equal to any typhoon that ever came out of the China Sea.

The wind, as if realizing that both were about to escape, redoubled its fury, whirling the two of them around the corner as easily as gutter-winds whirl straws. Breathless, half blinded, he lay back against the deck-house. For a minute or two he was not conscious that he held her in both his arms, so closely, indeed, that one mold might have served for them both. Presently, despite the fact that she was drenched, he sensed the pleasurable animal warmth of her body and the rapid rise and fall of her bosom. Strange fires sprang up in his heart; and one thought obliterated all others: come what might in after years, this moment would always be his.

His awakening from this dangerous dream was

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rude. The cave-woman was beating him with her fists, wild passion in every stroke.

"Let me go! I—can't—breathe! You are hurting me!"

He released her, though he retained hold of a forearm so powerfully that the marks of his fingers were visible for days.

The transition into the caveman period had been instantaneous, but it was not possible to recover except by slow degrees. So when he spoke to her he spoke consistently.

"Are you a fool? Didn't you know it was death? What in God's name were you about?"

"I had to come! It kept calling and calling! I couldn't help it! . . . How dare you call me a fool?" she blazed out.

"Well, if I ever saw one!"

"Let go my arm!"

"Not until I get you safe inside. You come with me."

She fought him all the way around to the smoke-room door. He opened it and pushed her roughly over the high threshold and followed.

"You have hurt me!"

"Sure I have. Hell! By rights you ought to be crumpled up without a whole bone in your body. One slip, one misstep. . . . Don't you know anything?"

"You have called me a fool."

"Uh-huh. You go below and change your clothes."

"You are insolent!"

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"Anything you please. Do you want me to carry you?"

All the fury she could crowd into her glance flew to his eyes. But she never spoke the words which stormed at her tongue. Something was forming in his eyes that reminded her of the morning in Venice. In another moment he would pick her up and carry her down-stairs. Angry as she was, she had not the courage to meet such an event.

She flung her hair out of her eyes, wrung it, made a loose knot of it, turned and staggered—for her body, minus the exaltation, weighed unutterable tons—into the main saloon. The door banged after her. She would never forgive him.

In these tremendous unforgettable moments both had broken through the shell of civilization. They were two human beings possessed of little more than instincts. A man revels in the recurrence of primordial instincts. No woman does, because she is afraid of instincts. Nature has warned her that these are traps.

Naturally Ruth was first to recover her poise, to resume her shell. She was honest enough later to make allowances for his roughness, urged by his terror for her safety. But she could not shut out the feel of his arms. As the shell closed over her in its entirety she was conscious of a great depression.

It was hours before William crawled back into his shell. He hated it; he knew it for just what it was—boundary lines, stone walls, moats. He had had a taste of such wonderful freedom that he

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never wanted to return to the shell. He knew that once he had it all buckled on again, he would review his conduct through the old microscopic lenses, which he did.

He had acted like an abysmal brute. He had hurt her; and things would never be the same as they had been. But her danger had driven him wild. And always the haunting memory of her body, warm and palpitating, against his. He thought of it as he dressed and tried to stamp out the thought. It was with him in the practically deserted dining-saloon, in the smoke-room later; it followed him back to his cabin, into his dreams, and it was with him in the morning when the storm was a thing of the past.

Calm returned; and the two picked up life where they had dropped it prior to the storm. By tacit agreement they never referred to the episode. Then they came to Ceylon, beautiful isle of spices; and the perverse little twist in their lives became forgotten.

One afternoon, after the return from Kandy, William went alone to the landing-pier in the harbor of Colombo. He saw the yacht *Elsa* in the offing.

CHAPTER XIX

SO the yacht *Elsa* had turned up at last? William eyed her gloomily and with hostile speculation. He could not deny that she was a thing of beauty among all the nondescript craft which dotted the harbor. How dingy the good old *Ajax* looked in the background, with her scarred plates, her peeling paint, her rusty anchor chains! Gulls were wheeling circles around her; lighters were thick under her ports; her booms were busy in the service of commerce. She looked like a great bumblebee which had fallen prey to an army of waterbugs. She would be carrying tea all the way to San Francisco. She had a place in the world, this homely *Ajax*; she was serving mankind honorably. William knew that he loved her. To him the ship had, since the storm, taken on a distinct personality; she was something more than teak and steel, something more than an inanimate man-driven thing.

And what of the other, the sleek, handsome yacht, with her white enamel, her polished brass, her dazzling awnings? A plaything, a rich man's plaything. William was without envy; his philosophy accepted the fact that there would always be an unequal distribution of wealth; he had no

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socialistic ideas. But he hated the *Elsa*, not because she was beyond his possession or represented one of the higher forms of luxury: she was a little kingdom which, to a certain extent, was beyond the reach of man's laws, ruled by a scoundrel whose lightest whim, right or wrong, was the only law. He could not help wondering how many women had cried their hearts out, too late, behind those glistening ports.

For an hour or more he watched the launch which bobbed at the foot of the ladder. He hoped Camden or Colburton, or both, would come ashore. He would speak to them civilly; and if they accepted his warning. . . . But would words mean anything? What was he to either but scum underfoot? They would either lie easily or ignore him and pass on. If he fought them and beat them—which is what really appealed to his present mood—there would be the infernal British law again. Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, Hong-Kong, all British ports; he was only a lone red-headed Irishman, while yonder man was a millionaire. It wouldn't be worth his while to beat them up and go to jail for it like a drunken sailor. He was literally surrounded by blind alleys.

They were following Ruth. There was nothing arguable about this conclusion. They had not given up the chase simply because they had failed to dispose of the only guardian the girl had. Colburton was rich; he had all the leisure in the world; he could abide his time.

William could understand certain phases of

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this ignoble pursuit. But what he could not understand was the persistence of it against the established fact that the girl was unwilling. He could not see where the zest of the chase came in under these conditions. To pursue something, some one, that loathed you and had made it patent to your face, suggested a mental make-up wholly beyond normal understanding. Hadn't that morning in Venice been conclusive? What more did the man want? Yet there he was, waiting patiently against the hour when he might safely strike. And how would he strike? From behind, in the dark?

If the girl was fool enough to cast her lot with a man like Colburton, why, there was nothing more to be said. You could not argue with a woman who put clothes and good times above her soul. You wasted your breath. But when the girl had looked into the pit at her feet and drawn back, when she had fled temptation, fought and conquered it, as he knew Ruth had. . . . Well, it was all past his understanding.

Without much difficulty he could fancy the girl's state of mind. She had failed in the work she loved; a little thing like nerves had barred her from fame and money. No doubt she had been desperate; and the devil always held a Colburton in reserve for this moment. But the innate good in her had won out. He never forgot the prayer; the memory of it was always coming back and filling his throat. Yet that black scoundrel did not intend to give her up!

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"To hell with the British jail!" William growled, shaking his fist toward the yacht. He would bump their heads together, come what might.

A Cingalese boatman, his mouth and chin spattered with the juice of the betel-nut, hailed William eagerly.

"Sahib wants boat?"

"No. Clear out and don't bother me!"

The Cingalese grinned airily and moved on.

How long had the *Elsa* been in the harbor? When was she going to haul up her cables? This last he must know definitely. Was Colburton on board or ashore? This little puzzle was shortly straightened out for him. Three men came on to the pier. From their talk William assumed that they were officers in mufti. Servants trailed along behind, carrying huge kit-bags and many gun-cases.

"I call this luck! To make our station after a bit of good shooting, and to travel on a gem of a yacht like that!"

"Colburton is a good sort, the infernal lucky beggar! Didn't Chetwynd kill two black panthers up around Perak last spring? Ah, here comes the launch for us. We'll be able to pick up a few quid on the way. Colburton plays a rotten game of bridge, I understand."

Neither Camden nor Colburton was aboard the launch. William did not know whether he was relieved or sorry.

"What yacht is that?" he asked, casually, as the boatswain made fast.

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"*Elsa*, out of New York."

"Where's she bound?"

"Perak," said the boatswain, not very civilly.

This was welcome news to William. The *Elsa* would be out of the way for at least eight weeks. He could now go through India and Burma without looking over his shoulder every time he passed an alley after dark. What if the man had given up the chase? What if he had suddenly tired of the game? No; a man did not travel ten or twelve thousand miles without having made up his mind rather definitely. It was a temporary truce; William refused to deceive himself. He determined to lessen his vigilance in no respect.

He spoke to the boatswain again, prompted by the desire to throw a mild bomb into the enemy's camp. For the moment the gamin was in the ascendant.

"Say, you tell Mr. Colburton that Mr. Grogan says he hopes the worst will happen. Ye-ah." The boatswain stared at him in open-mouth amazement. "And you might add that if either he or Mr. Camden speaks to Miss Jones again, it 'll be a cot on the sunny side of the hospital—that is, if it turns out to be a doctor's job instead of an undertaker's. So long, Mary!"

A gamin, when he shoots his verbal bolt, tarries not for reply. His victory depends upon the last word. William turned and marched away, whistling cheerfully. Anyhow, the jackal and his master would understand that the brindle watch-dog was loose in the front yard o' nights.

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Then, too late, he realized that his gamin's instincts had betrayed him. Camden would now be on the watch for him. There would be no catching him unaware.

Next morning, when the tourists boarded the *Ajax*, William was very glad to note that the *Elsa* had cleared out early. What sister Ruth did not know she would not worry about. Not only was he going to play the watch-dog, but he was going to play it without her suspecting in the least. Only the Cumæan Sibyl could have picked a flaw in his gaiety that morning.

He romped with the children and played for them, jested and laughed with everybody, from the aloof missionaries down to the little girl who had fallen in love with the chief officer; and all the while his Irish heart was heavy with a man's burden in which there were hopeless love, pain, and bewilderment of doubt, since what he really knew of Ruth's story was based on half-truths and suppositions. He did not care what she had done; his faith in her lay in what she had not done.

And on top of this, the missionary who had constituted himself a committee of one to regulate the morals of the tourists sequestered William that afternoon and mildly remonstrated with him as to his thoughtless conduct in regard to Miss Jones.

Whereupon William boiled over. "This is the second time you've spoken to me on this subject. If you didn't wear that kind of a collar and neck-tie I'd make that wrestling-match between Esau and the angel look like a frame-up!"

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"Mr. Grogan!"

"Ye-ah. What's your idea of a Christian, anyhow?"

"Mr. Grogan, my intentions—"

"Sure! Your intentions are the best in the world, but you come to me with the idea that mine aren't. That's what makes me kick. Can't a man be decent and clean, to your thinking, without crawling around on his hands and knees all day praying? You've been holding the club over Hot-tentots too long; you've lost track of white men."

"Never have I heard such language!"

"If you hang around me, you'll hear worse 'n that. Anyhow, it's about time you heard some real language. Everybody seems afraid of you, but I'm not. Miss Jones came on board unhappy; and it's none of your business nor mine what the cause was. People who aren't happy naturally don't go running around laughing and giggling; they like to be left alone. Just as the cobwebs are getting cleared up, you have to come along with this kind of a song and dance. She wanted somebody who could laugh and talk; she wasn't aching to hear sermons. This ship, according to your idea, is as bad as the front porch of a summer hotel. As a matter of fact, everybody seems to be enjoying themselves, everybody but you. If they put on airs at first, they soon got over it. They're all human and kindly. I know it because I can see. Where do you get the noise that because folks laugh frequently they must be bad?"

"Mr. Grogan, you misunderstand me!"

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"The trouble with you is you don't understand yourself. I haven't seen you crack a smile since we left New York. The world isn't as bad as all that. Of course, Miss Jones and I sit at the same table, in the same seats on trains, and go shopping together. Aren't we always with the bunch? Where's the harm? There's other parsons on board, and they have a good time like the rest of the folks. Isn't Miss Haines always tagging after the chief officer? Have you told her how wicked that is? Aw, piffle! Aren't all the young folks paired off in some innocent way? Is there anything unnatural about it? You need an oculist."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Grogan, that you look upon my good offices in this abrupt manner," said the missionary, with asperity. He rose from his chair.

"You ought to be shouting glad I didn't look at 'em from another roost. I guess the trouble with you is you want a scandal. You're yearning for one. You want to save something so bad that you'd be glad if something bad happened. You'd have started a riot on the Ark, believe me. Some folks are built that way. Anything good looks suspicious to 'em. Gee! I wish my old archeologists were back. They had whiter whiskers than you, and they saw good in everything, even me. I've nothing more to say for publication," William concluded.

He could see by the expression on the missionary's pale face that he had turned an officious meddler into a bitter enemy; but he did not care. His Jeremiade could lay as it fell.

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"Talking to me like that! I know what's the trouble with him. He sees things just the same as I do, but when they get into his head they begin walking backward."

Half an hour later he had forgotten the incident. The agile mind is generally nearer happiness than the plodding one; and William had the faculty of leaping mentally from one object to another, like a chamois. Ruth found him drawing pictures of elephants for the children.

"What are you drawing?" she asked.

"Elephants."

"Really?" She laughed.

"Sure." He extended a finished product. His ideas of anatomy were certainly wonderful to behold. Had such an elephant existed, every hunter in the world would have been scouring the jungles.

"Goodness! what is it?" she asked, holding the drawing flat, then endways, then upside down.

"Oh, I see. It's Vesuvius."

"Aw! Say, kids, what is this picture?" he demanded, snatching back the drawing.

"Elephant!" they shrieked.

"There, smarty!"

She sat down on the deck. "Let me draw one." The children clamored about her shoulders and William craned his neck. With a few deft strokes a real elephant appeared; he had the right kind of ears, trunk, wrinkles, eyes.

"Oh, that's a *real* elephant!" cried one of the children.

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And there's your child. They don't want real elephants, they want make-believes, for they live in a world of make-believe.

"We like Uncle Bill's elephants, 'cause they're so high *up*!"

"I see," replied Ruth, gravely. "You are all cubists. I didn't know that."

The children seized the two drawings and made off to exhibit them.

"You're as bad as they are," she laughed.

"Ain't they great? But they like my zebra best. All you have to do is to draw a donkey and send him to jail."

"You are always thinking of that elephant."

"Sure I am. If I don't ride an elephant between Bombay and Calcutta, it's going to break my heart. Ever since I was five I've been wanting to ride elephants. None of your zoo stuff, but the real article, howdahs with masonic aprons hanging down the sides, and W. G. embroidered with pearls, like the sleight-o'-hand fakers use in the vaudeville. Great! And now I'm going to tell you a secret. I've ordered the biggest, highest elephant in Jaipur."

"What?"

"Ye-ah. He'll be there at the station for us, and we'll have him all the way up to Amber and back, howdah and all."

"William Grogan, and after all my efforts to make you save your money!"

"'Sh! Here's the joke. It's the state elephant, and all it costs me is five dollars, including the

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howdah. It's first come, first served. They told me all about it back at Cook's in New York. And they say the elephant's as big as Jumbo. You and me and some of the kids—huh? Style? Believe me, nothing that ever walked around Coney will touch us."

Ruth smiled back into his eyes, but she was deep in wonder. It was utterly impossible to associate this boy with the caveman who had dragged her off the deck during the storm. The terrible strength of him when he was roused! There were marks upon her arm yet. She had been as a feather in his grasp. After all, it was easy to understand why the children loved him; he was a child whose body alone had grown up. His brain would never develop much beyond what it was. When all this wonderful journey was over he would return to his drain-pipes and bathtubs, his cravings satisfied. To have dreamed all his life of elephants and spangled howdahs! If that wasn't pure boy, what was? He was the kind children ran to and dogs fawned over.

She sighed. She, too, loved children. But they never put their soft little arms around her neck, because instinctively they sensed the repellence. She dared not soften toward them. There was nothing enigmatical in this attitude. She did not want the hidden depths in her soul stirred by the potent knowledge that never would she have children of her own. She had failed in everything. And some day this boy would marry and settle down, and there would always be chil-

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dren around him, his children and his children's children.

This isn't a guide-book. It is eight months or more in the life of a young man who was vitally interested in living, who was making his boyhood dreams come true by the sheer force of will. If the fulfilment was not exactly in conformity with the conception, that was due to these unromantic times. If I attempted to chronicle all the things that happened to him, along with a complete itinerary of his travels, I should require the lease of another ninety-nine years.

His principal recollections of India were dung fires at night, tigers (in cages), apes, color, swarming people, and temples which resembled his bedroom windows on frosty winter mornings. Among other things, he arrived at that painful and critical moment when he must make his choice, eschew hotel labels or buy new suit-cases, there being no more room on those he had.

As for his dreams, he knocked down cocoanuts by hand and drank the milk; he picked tea-leaves, cardamon seeds, spices; he rode camels and donkeys; he passed through the tail end of a typhoon; and he rode from Jaipur to ancient Amber on the state elephant, howdah, spangles, and all.

In fact, he had a Durbar all by himself. The natives, upon beholding the huge pachyderm, rheumatic and disgruntled, decked out in all his giddy paraphernalia, concluded that some intimate friend of the British Raj was passing, and

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forthwith they beat their foreheads in the dust. If you should ask William, no doubt he will tell you that this was the greatest moment in his life.

Great dramatizations do not always get over; the lesson does not always stick in the mind; it is often crowded aside by the false importance of some triviality. Perversely the audience will seize upon the incident, and right away they will proceed to make the dramatist rich, when all he wanted was to be famous.

The drama in William's life was always overshadowed by that comic episode in Jaipur. The least thing stirred him into the telling of it.

He did not find his letter of credit at Rangoon. He was shown a cable, ostensibly written by himself in Aden, by which the letter had been forwarded to Bombay. A wire to Bombay elicited the surprising fact that his money was now on its way to Hong-Kong as per his further instructions dated Colombo. He knew that this bewildering tangle would be due to forgeries, but this knowledge did not help him solve his increasing financial difficulties. He cabled Hong-Kong the facts, however, and ordered them to hold the letter until he called personally for it with the letter of identification. He landed in Singapore with a little less than a hundred dollars. But he was confident that this sum would tide him over until he reached Hong-Kong. They were to stop only three days in Singapore.

He bore up cheerfully, but none the less he worried in secret. Cook's agents confessed that this

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was a new game to them and was beyond comprehension, since the man who was manipulating the letter's nomadic existence could not possibly benefit by it financially.

The yacht *Elsa* was not in the harbor of Singapore, and this fact lightened William's burden somewhat.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of the fourth day the *Ajax* would sail for Hong-Kong direct, as it was proposed to spend considerable time in China and Japan. Ruth went shopping with the two spinsters. She wanted a good supply of those delicious mangosteens. William, on his part, agreed to superintend the shipping aboard of two Canton grass lounges.

Coming on board just before sailing, he saw a bunch of mangosteens in her chair, and concluded that she had gone below to change. He himself elected to take a tubbing and don his new pongee suit. But when at dinner-time Ruth did not appear, he grew alarmed and sought her cabin. One of the spinsters answered his summons.

"Where is Miss Jones?" he asked.

"Isn't she on deck?"

"No. I can't find her." He hesitated. "Did she come on board with you?"

"Why, no. She met Mr. Camden, and the two went over to the markets for more fruit. . . . Mr. Grogan, what is the matter?"

Deathly white, William suddenly collapsed against the door-jamb.

"She . . . she has been left behind!"

CHAPTER XX

THAT night William Grogan went down into hell and remained there for ten days, every hour of which was a day in itself.

The captain was dreadfully sorry, but he could not turn back. Once the *Ajax* set her forefoot toward the open sea, she had to go on. She was like fate: nothing could swerve her from her course save an act of God. Who first laid down this immutable sea-law that a ship must never turn back? No one seems to know. If a fire breaks out in the hold, they fight it; they send out calls for help; but they do not turn back, save in rare instances; they keep plowing on.

"God knows I'm sorry, lad; but we dropped our pilot two hours back, and I could not turn around if I wanted to. If what you say is true, there's only one thing to do. Send a wireless to the American consul-general, state all the facts, and have patience."

"Patience? My God! and she left all her money with me!"

"You write the wireless and I'll sign it," said the captain, gently. This young chap's misery went to his heart. "The consul-general will

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watch out for her. She'll report there the moment she learns she's missed the boat."

"Can't I make you understand? She's been abducted! Haven't I told you the whole story?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't turn back. Write your wireless. Tell the consul-general to notify the police. If your fears have any real grounds, the police dragnet will bring out the facts. Keep your head. Lots of people miss boats, and nothing serious happens. Besides, I've traveled too many seas not to know a gentleman when I see him. You've misjudged this man Camden."

"Hell! didn't he fool me for weeks? Can't you speak the first ship going west and let me transship?" William begged.

"I could do that; but we'll meet no steamer going west. We'll make Hong-Kong on Wednesday morning, though, and you can pick up the German-Lloyder which is scheduled to leave that same night. A matter of ten days, and you'll be in Singapore yourself."

"Ten days! She may be dead or . . . or worse! My God, or worse! They'll be off with her in that yacht!"

"Mention it in the wireless. Come, I'll go with you. I'll do everything I humanly can for you, except turn back."

"Poor, love-lorn devil!" thought the captain. The girl was all right. Men weren't such fools as to pursue in this fashion. Still, it was natural that, being deeply in love, William should imagine all these horrible calamities. The girl was prob-

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ably at this moment comfortably arranging her affairs at Raffles, or was at the cable office, awaiting the message she knew would come.

The long wireless was despatched, and around nine o'clock came the reply. It stated briefly that the consul-general had seen nothing of Miss Warren (for William had given Ruth's real name), that there was no yacht named *Elsa* in the harbor, that no one by the name of Colburton or Camden was registered at any of the hotels, that the police machinery had been set in motion, and that as soon as the consul-general heard of Miss Warren's whereabouts a wire would be sent.

"Can't you see now?" cried William. "She hasn't turned up; they can't find her. I tell you she's been abducted!"

The wireless had dissipated a good deal of the captain's confidence. "But white men!"

"Haven't I been hammering at you that only their skins are white? But, by Heaven! they'll be whiter when I meet up with them, damn them!"

"Not so loud, not so loud!" warned the captain. "Buck up! There's only one thing you can do, Mr. Grogan, and that's to wait. Make up your mind to that. And don't let the ship see how you take it."

"A lot I care what they think!" said William.

So he settled down to wait, and joined that body of miserables who are individually designated Tantalus and Prometheus, only it was time the gods dangled before his eyes, while the eagle tore at his heart.

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All night William wandered up and down the decks. But for the ability to ease the pressure by sighs, his heart must have cracked. Whether his eyes were open or closed, he could not shut out the infernal picture. No matter where he looked into the night, he saw her terrified face, he heard her cries, saw her outstretched hands. He saw the man laugh as she struggled in his arms, her hair down, her dress torn at the throat. . . . She was calling, and he could not go to her!

If only he had warned her about Camden! He had let her walk straight into the trap. It was all his fault. He should have told her; and all the time he had believed he was saving her needless worry! He had lived straight, he had lived clean, he had acted honorably all his life; and yet God could shoot this bolt into his heart, mercilessly! He could not understand it. It wasn't a square deal.

Round and round the deck-houses he walked, mile after mile. He was unconscious of time or place. Every half-hour he visited the wireless man; but there was always the same answer to his inquiries—nothing. By and by he began to see her as day by day he had seen her, his school-teacher! She was reading or sewing or chatting, and once she was lying in his arms, drenched, her hair blowing into his face, her heart beating against his. And there she was, back yonder, calling, calling; and he couldn't go to her!

Each step he took said, "Hurry, hurry!" Would dawn never come? Hurry, hurry! Never

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had the *Ajax* moved so slowly through the water. When the gray east became suddenly slashed with crimson and gold, when the Oriental sun burst over the horizon, it did not mean to him that another day was come; it signified that he was a little nearer, just a little nearer.

He did not sleep ten hours during the voyage around to Hong-Kong. The doctor secretly drugged him, fearful that he might develop brain fever. The drug served to deaden his mind for a little while, but the doctor could not get him off his feet. He walked without sense of locomotion, mechanically, and, like a sleep-walker, continually bumped into passing objects. When he wasn't walking he was bending over the cutwater. He never saw the flying-fish, the porpoise, or the brilliant phosphorescence at night. He saw only so much water being left behind.

Once a day a wireless was received. It consisted invariably of two words—"No information."

Of course the gist of the story became ship's talk; but they were all very kind, and they encouraged him whenever they had a chance. But the kindest thing they did was to leave him alone. The children followed him about dumbly; he no longer knew how to play with them.

If a woman mysteriously disappears, rarely is she given the benefit of a doubt. The majority of those who knew her are first to dip into the black paint. It is not a question of charity or meanness—simply that it is human nature to

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judge and condemn whenever the defendant is absent from court. Ruth had been carrying on a secret intrigue with Camden and had run away with him. It was all very simple; but nobody must tell that poor distracted Irishman; the only kindness they could offer him was to let him find out the truth for himself.

No Apache Indian, in his most diabolical frenzy, ever conceived tortures equal to those William planned to mete out to Colburton and Camden. He drove nails into their hands and feet; crucified them; he put out their eyes and let them go; he tied them together and threw fangless cobras into the room and watched them go mad from terror; he buried them in the sand and put food and water beside them and stayed by until they died; he drove them naked into one of those terrible ant-hills; or he broke their legs and arms with his bare hands and disfigured them.

Perhaps it was all very horrible and primitive, but its true significance might bear investigation. No man is worthy the name of manhood who would not plan such reprisals under such conditions. There are certain evils for which men do not go into court for their remedies. Nature demands that they shall take the law into their own hands and be accountable to God alone.

The thought of burying his two hands into the flesh of those men did much toward keeping William's mental balance from toppling. The doctor followed him about a good deal, but never attempted to calm or soothe him when he burst

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forth into these frenzied flights. The doctor was wise, and he had a fairly good idea of the hell William was passing through. The night before arriving at Hong-Kong he spoke decidedly to the captain, who had gone over to the majority with his opinion.

"On my soul, I believe Grogan has the right of it. I can spot a good woman when I see one."

"We all believe we're able to do that," said the captain, dryly.

"Well, you and I have jogged up and down these seas long enough to know that in the East men do things they would not dream of doing over in the West. There's something in the damned lazy, good-for-nothing air that puts a sag in the moral fiber. Camden, I know, was a periodical champagne drunkard. I helped jack him up one morning. You know what booze does over here. Well, I hope to God the Irishman finds him; and, more than that, I'd give a year's pay to be sitting in a front seat."

The captain smoked on, offering no comment.

"The psychology of love is the most interesting thing I know of. The lad has never breathed a word to the girl," continued the doctor. "Felt that he wasn't good enough for her. Oh, he's told me everything by degrees. Used to watch her go past his cellar window, and never saw her face until she came aboard. And he's going through this hell not because he has any hope of winning her—which isn't likely if you've taken the trouble to watch her as I have—but because he's got to go

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through it. The girl's a genius at the piano." The captain nodded. "Now, people who have real genius don't give a hang what the neighbors say. If there had been anything between her and Camden, she'd have made no bones about it. She'd have taken her luggage, told Grogan frankly, and walked off the ship. You and the others can believe what you like; I'm for Grogan's way of thinking. There's been a low deal somewhere. And I've a feeling that the Irishman is going to meet up with the rogues."

William had a hundred and fifty dollars when he landed in Hong-Kong. The *Ajax's* purser had bought in the remainder of William's ticket. It was not obligatory; it was merely an act of kindness. There wasn't a man or woman on board—the meddling missionary having dropped out at Calcutta—who wasn't in sympathy with this deep-freckled, blue-eyed, red-headed Irishman, and who was not sorry to see him depart.

He had his luggage and Ruth's transhipped to the German boat, which sailed for Singapore after sundown. He choked as he saw the cheerful lights of the *Ajax* sink below the horizon. It was possible that he would never again set eyes upon that good old ship, and only by the merest chance would any of the tourists cross his path again. He was all alone. And Ruth might be dead . . . or worse!

He was traveling second-class, and at nine he went down to his stuffy cabin astern. He sat on the edge of his bunk and fingered the Greek

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hand-bag he had bought for Ruth in Athens. Next he laid out the balance of his money; it was not much.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, drew a hand across his forehead, and sat down again, very sick and very limp. He had forgotten to go for his letter of credit! And no cable would bring it to him, since he had given orders to surrender it only to himself in person. He guessed God had really forsaken him. To face he knew not what labors with less than seventy dollars, when every move would require money, and still more money! He had had nearly a whole day, and like a fool he had wandered up and down the water-front to pass the time.

He did not brood overlong. The thing was done, and it was useless to rail over his forgetfulness. He was weak and stale. The mental worry had visibly worn him down in the flesh. Being without money, he would have to have new blood. So he set to work methodically, eating a good deal of meat and exercising faithfully in the gymnasium.

He got into Singapore in the morning, and went at once to the consulate. Nothing had been heard of Miss Warren. The yacht *Elsa* had not put in an appearance. (No one had thought to look for the yacht over back of the island, near Rharu, on the mainland. From that point to Singapore was a matter of twenty-odd minutes by rail.) The consul-general was a little skeptical regarding William's tale, but he offered all the aid he had in

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his power. He suggested that he personally write Hong-Kong the circumstances, and, if that did not bring the letter of credit, to cable Leipzig, the home office of the bankers. Until that question was settled definitely he would act as banker to Mr. Grogan up to the sum of two hundred dollars.

Fortified in this manner, William sallied forth blindly. He went to all the hotels and questioned everybody, even the Chinese boys, but without success. The spinsters had seen Camden, so the yacht must be in hiding somewhere. (Neither he nor the police thought to extend their inquiries to the officers' club.) William searched the bars and billiard-rooms, still unsuccessfully. But the gods were pulling him out of Tartarus and the eagle was about to soar aloft.

At half past nine that first night he went into the open café of Raffles Hotel and saw Camden, seated before a bottle of wine. William stood perfectly still. He wanted all vertigo out of his head before he acted. Presently he saw Camden take a soiled chamois bag from an inside pocket, open the neck and peer into it. William recognized that chamois bag. Camden set the bag on the table and tilted the champagne-bottle.

William walked over, swept the chamois bag into his own pocket, and sat down.

The bottle slipped from Camden's hand and smashed upon the stone flooring. The wine seethed and ran about his feet.

"Camden, there's murder in me to-night. I

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don't want to kill you. Write down where she is and write it straight, for if you don't I'll kill you. There won't be any jiu-jitsu to-night. Write it down." William pushed a slip of paper and a pencil across the table. "Give it to me straight. I'm not afraid of anything or anybody to-night."

Camden was actually hypnotized. Slowly he wrote across the face of the slip of paper. Grogan!

As William reached for the address, Camden awoke to the realization that he had been hypnotized. He picked up his glass, ostensibly to drink; instead, with a deft turn of the wrist he dashed the wine toward William's eyes, hoping to retrieve the chamois bag and escape.

But William was abnormally alert. He anticipated the movement, ducked in time, and before Camden's arm had reached the full stretch of the treacherous fling William struck. The blow hit Camden squarely in the face, and he crumpled up and lay quietly in the puddle of wine.

William caught up the address. He gazed about coolly. At one end of the veranda were some ladies and gentlemen chatting over late coffee. None of them moved; they were obeying the Oriental axiom—keep out of the other man's muddle if you can. William stirred Camden with his foot and the man rolled over on his back.

"I guess you won't be pretty to look at for a long time to come," was William's sole comment.

And now for the jackal's master! He walked hurriedly toward the street. He did not bother to engage a rickshaw. He knew the way, even

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if a bit hazily. Malay Street, where the Scarlet Woman plied her ancient business! Malay Street! God! and they had locked her up in one of those hell-holes—white men! The street with the big numbers painted on Chinese lanterns!—Malay Street! And only a short time before they had all driven through it on a lark!

He broke into a run, zigzagging in and out of the crowds, up this street and down that, through the quaint Chinese quarters, until he finally came out into the sinister thoroughfare.

It required but a moment or two to locate the house. If Camden had lied he would go back and kill him. He rushed into the hallway. The front doors are rarely locked in this street. A gross-bodied woman opposed him with a snarl, demanding what he meant by such conduct. He caught her by the shoulders and swung her around brutally.

"Listen to me! What room is she in, the young woman they forced in here about ten days ago? No lies, or I'll break your neck. Give me the room!" He shook her violently. Her head wobbled like a manikin's.

"Twelve!" The word shot out of her mouth in a kind of gurgle.

William flung her against the wall and sprang up the stairs. The air was vile with the smell of cheap whisky and cigarettes. From the parlor came the pan-like tinkle of a mechanical piano. He reached the upper floor and stooped before the first door. It was number ten. Two doors

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farther on he stooped again and cautiously tried the door. It was not locked. He opened it and stepped into the room noiselessly.

He saw a strange tableau. Ruth was standing behind the bed, her hair down as he had seen those dreadful nights on board the *Ajax*. One of her sleeves was gone, and there were drab bruises on the golden skin. Her lips were bleeding slightly. Not far from the bed stood Colburton. He had a smile on his face; it had frozen there. Down both cheeks were livid welts, the marks of finger-nails. The girl had evidently given a good account of herself.

"Has . . . has he hurt you, sister?" asked William, his tongue hot and dry against his palate.

"Not very much. But I think God has sent you . . . along in time."

William turned upon the man with the frozen smile.

CHAPTER XXI

RUTH'S abduction had not offered any great obstacles or difficulties. It required principally a certain amount of patience, and Camden could mark time with any man. The whole affair depended upon her isolation from the alert protectorate of the Irishman. And when Camden's spy reported that Ruth had gone into the markets without William, he acted at once.

The supreme irony lay in William's silence regarding his discoveries. Had he confided in Ruth, she would not have greeted Camden as an old friend or stepped into the rickshaw he had provided for her. That William suspected anything was furthest from his thoughts. For the boatswain, for some reason known to himself, had not repeated his conversation with William.

Thus, when the jackal approached Ruth he did so confidently, and naturally there was nothing in her attitude to disturb this confidence. Indeed, she greeted him cordially. Where had he been? How long had he been in Singapore? And where was he going from there? The *Ajax* was sailing in about an hour, and she had been hunting the Chinese markets for mangosteens. She exhibited a meager dozen of the luscious fruit, each pendent .

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from a long fiber thread much used by the Chinese fruit-sellers.

"Pshaw!" said Camden. "I wish you'd let me guide you into the markets again. I know where you can get bushels of the fruit for almost nothing."

"How long will it take?" she asked, eagerly.

"A quarter of an hour at the longest."

So Ruth handed her mangosteens to the spinsters, took Camden's rickshaw while he engaged another, and the two of them wheeled away. Now Ruth possessed a good idea of locality; and it presently occurred to her that her rickshaw boy was not going in the direction of the markets, which lay eastward. She touched the boy on the shoulder with her sunshade. Instead of turning his head to inquire what she wished, he broke into the full run which is almost as fast as a horse ordinarily trots. He would be able to maintain this gait for an hour or more. The Chinese in Singapore are the sturdiest in the world.

Ruth became alarmed. The boy was patently running away with her. She looked back to find that Camden had stopped and was arguing furiously with his boy. Next she saw him jump from the rickshaw and run after her. He stumbled and fell, and by the time he was on his feet again there was no possible chance of his overtaking her. He stood in the middle of the dusty road, apparently bewildered and undecided; and this picture was the last she ever saw of him, for her boy shot up a side street. All this was very good acting

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on Camden's part. If the abduction turned out abortive, Ruth would retain the impression of his efforts to come to her assistance and he would be free to act again.

Ruth began to beat the rickshaw boy lustily; in fact, she broke her sunshade over his head and shoulders without obtaining the least satisfaction. Not having even a shadowy idea of what was meant by this peculiar conduct of the boy, a mild coma laid hold of her. The reality became a disordered dream. What was left of the cover of her sunshade flapped in the rushing wind, and the broken ribs beat a thin tattoo on the thills of the rickshaw. She might easily have slipped over the back of the vehicle, but the idea never occurred to her until too late to serve.

It was now half after three, and the *Ajax* sailed at four! Still she sat there motionless, staring stupidly at the broad, yellow, heaving back of the Chinaman. Scarcely grew the houses and bungalows; they were leaving the town behind. Once she saw a Sikh policeman; but she never thought to raise her arms to attract his attention.

About half an hour later the boy stopped in front of what appeared to be a low native tavern. It stood back from the road in the shade of some bamboos. Both Malays and Chinese were grouped about on the veranda, some smoking and others drinking tea.

She jumped from the rickshaw and attempted to run, but her legs were too numb. The rickshaw boy laughed silently, grasped her by the arms, and

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propelled her irresistibly into the tavern, where he calmly locked her up in a room whose walls were lined with tousled bunks, beside which stood small stands littered with the paraphernalia of the opium-smoker.

A sound, coming from far off, cleared the stupor out of her head. It was the bassoon-like whistle of the *Ajax*. She was being left behind! She ran to the door, shook the knob, beat upon the panels until her knuckles began to bleed. Left behind! What did it mean? What *could* it mean? The rickshaw boy had not taken her hand-bag or purse. He had simply run away with her and locked her up. The motive was not robbery. She groped into a thousand channels for some clue to this amazing adventure, but there was no solution anywhere. She was being left behind, and almost penniless. It was maddening!

Some time after sunset they came for her, a huge Chinaman and a slim, lithe Malay. They robbed her of her hand-bag and purse. The Chinaman thrust his hand down her neck and tore loose the chamois bag. They then proceeded to bind her hands behind her back. Cloths were tied over her eyes and mouth. She submitted passively; she had sense enough to appreciate the utter folly of struggling. The Chinaman swung her over his shoulder and trotted down-stairs. Presently she knew that she was being put into a closed carriage.

She was in a peculiar state of mind. She dared not think; she must let herself drift, drift; that, or go mad with anxiety. She even tried to con-

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vince herself that she was acting in a moving-picture drama of some kind. She forced these pictures into her thoughts, and others; she called up reserve after reserve, but they were not strong enough for the onslaughts of terror. What were they going to do with her? Where were they taking her? What did it all mean?

The ride took something more than an hour. There was at no time any indication that her captors were in a hurry. The horse jogged along. When the carriage came to the final halt there was a wait of four or five minutes. Then she felt the muscular arms of the Chinaman again. She was being carried into a house. The air was strong with the stale smoke of Turkish cigarettes.

"Take her up to room twelve." It was a woman's voice. "I'll send Saki San up with food later."

A few minutes after Ruth was set down and the knots at her wrists were loosened. A door closed and a key turned in the lock. She dragged her hands free and tore off the bandages. It was dark, but she knew that she was in a bedroom.

There were two windows, rear and side. The one in the rear overlooked a small back yard in the center of which stood a kind of outhouse. A Chinaman was lounging in the doorway, smoking his little metal pipe. Behind him other Chinese moved in a film of blue vapor.

The side window was less than six feet from the next house. She stared into the velvet blackness of the window opposite. Even as she gazed a

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match flared. Soon a candle flickered and revealed a woman in a low-necked dress. A dead cigarette hung pendent from her lips. A shadow passed between her and the light. The shadow was a man. The woman drew the shade.

Ruth leaned against the casing of her window; she was sick with horror. She had no illusions regarding yonder brief picture. A monstrous faintness threatened her, but she clung to her senses desperately. All the strength, all the cunning and invention God had given her she would need.

She took off her hat—a pith helmet—and hid the two steel hat-pins in the side of her skirt where she could reach them handily. Then she sought the door, but without hope. As she expected, it was locked on the outside. There was no inside bolt. She could not get out, but any one could get in.

She returned to the side window. By pressing her cheek closely to the left wall she was able to secure a glimpse of the street in which the house stood. Across the way she saw a huge Chinese lantern swaying in the mild night wind. Upon this lantern was a rudely painted number.

She heard footsteps in the hall, and she stepped back behind the bed, into the corner. The door opened and a gross woman, with thick, dry, blond hair and deeply rouged cheeks, entered with an oil-lamp. She peered around the room until she discovered Ruth. Then she set the lamp on a stand in the far corner.

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"Nobody's going to hurt you," said the woman, indifferently. "Have you any idea where you are?"

"Yes."

"Oh. Well, it's Malay Street, all right. Now, don't waste your breath calling out. When there's no tourists in town, the Sikh police don't bother to watch us carefully. And if they do hear you they'll think it's the usual racket. If you're sensible you'll be allowed the freedom of this bedroom. If you kick up, why, I'll have to tie you. You needn't look so scared. You won't see any men, if that's worrying you."

"Are you an American?"

"There's no nationality in this business," said the woman, shrugging. "And don't waste your breath asking questions. They won't be answered."

"How . . . how long are you going to keep me here? I have no money."

"I don't know how long. That depends upon you. When they come for you you'll find out what you want to know. I'll send food up to you. But no nonsense. It won't do you a bit of good."

"Do you want money?"

"You've just told me you hadn't any."

The woman went out, shut the door, and locked it. Ruth sat down on the bed, fingering the glass heads of her hat-pins. If any one so much as touched her, she would strike to kill. If only her body would cease its idiotic trembling! . . . *They!* Who were *they* who would come for her?

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Her hell began about the same time as William's, and there was but little difference in character. The sum was terror and suspense.

Not in the slightest way did Ruth associate Camden with her dreadful plight. She was positive that even now he was sending out alarms. Nor did Colburton enter her thoughts. She had reached the opinion that, sensibly recognizing the uselessness of pursuing her, he had gone back to New York.

She had often heard and read of the moral lawlessness of white men in the Far East. Some vile scoundrel had noticed her in the streets. Well, she could die.

After a while she slid to her knees and prayed.

The prayer was interrupted by the door opening again. She sprang up defensively. But the new-comer was only a pretty little Japanese girl with a tray upon which lay toast, fruit, and tea. She set the tray down on the center-table and courtesied cheerfully.

"I spig you lig English," she said, which Ruth readily interpreted as "I speak English like you."

"Do you like money?" asked Ruth.

"Umhm. I lig make mo-nee."

"Will you go to the American consulate and tell them Miss Warren is here? They will make you rich."

The Japanese girl laid her finger on her lips and nodded toward the door. This gesture conveyed to Ruth that some one was on guard outside in the hall, the blond woman probably.

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"No can do. She keel me I spig outside. No can do. I lig you. You no same's oth' women." Saki San approached Ruth and inspected her with that frank and childish curiosity of the Japanese. She giggled. "Velly nice. I come topside two time day. Tea? Coffee?"

As Ruth did not answer, she bobbed up and down several times. Then she went to the door in that slipshod manner which is charming in the Orient and slovenly elsewhere.

Ruth sat up in a chair all night, and toward morning she fell asleep from exhaustion. So long as she remained a prisoner in this room she was determined not to sleep at night or to undress. She was not wholly ignorant of this phase of life, and resolved to steal what sleep she could during the day. There was always something in the newspapers; and she recalled that life among these outcasts began at sundown and ended at sunrise.

The first day was very hot and very quiet. It rained a little. It is always raining a little in Singapore.

There were combs and brushes on the bureau, but she did not touch them, much as she longed to.

Her breakfast consisted of eggs, tea, and toast. She was not hungry, but she knew that only by eating could she keep her strength.

The little Japanese girl, who was really as pretty as a doll, noticed the snarled and tumbled hair of the prisoner. When she came in with the evening meal she carried a new brush and comb.

"These new. Chinaman buy 'em shop over

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town. Belong you. Me Saki San. Me comb hair?"

Ruth could not help smiling. Impulsively she gave the brush and comb to Saki San and sat down in a chair. The Japanese girl fussed over her for an hour, and somehow her touch soothed the raw nerves. But Saki San would not talk. She never brought into this room any of the secrets of the house.

"You sleep night?"

Ruth did not know whether to say yes or no. It might be a trap. She compromised by shrugging.

"You sleep day. Watch night. Maybe so no man catch um sleep." Saki San did not smile as she offered this advice. "Hon'able lady un'stan'?"

"Yes."

Saki San, which was a nickname, knew absolutely nothing about morals. From her point of view the life she lived was proper, if arduous. Her parents away off in Saki, Japan, owed money and regularly she sent home half of her earnings. But instinctively she did know that this strange, beautiful white woman saw things differently.

Saki San had known many white women. They cried a good deal when alone, drank deeply, used all manner of drugs, and sometimes prayed wildly to a strange God Saki San had never heard of until the white man took her from the segregated district in Tokio and eventually left her here in Singapore. For two years now she had been com-

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panion to these white women who called themselves lost. She could not understand what that word meant unless it was that they could not find their way back home.

Four days dragged themselves by. There was scarce an hour in which Ruth did not think of her Irishman. Oh, he would not forsake her; he would find her. But he must hurry! hurry! Her whimsical blue-eyed Irishman, tender and thoughtful and kind! What if he did lack polish? His mind was crystal and his heart was gold; and he wore his cynicism as a chestnut wears its mistletoe, a false growth grafted upon him without his leave; whom children loved and old men grew fond of. No, he would not forsake her.

CHAPTER XXII

ONE afternoon, toward dusk—the fifth day of her captivity—Retrospection seized her and whirled her away in his purple chariot.

Retrospection, who is one of the unmentioned gods of tragedy, is never very particular about his backgrounds; Persian, Axminster or rag carpet, palace or hovel, little he cares; to him the play's the thing. Upon this occasion he set the disembodied spirit of Ruth in a furnished room, neat and comfortable, one flight up, in a genteel boarding-house in Washington Square. The scene would not have impressed the adventurous, consisting as it did of a lone young woman (who Ruth recognized as herself) feverishly packing a suitcase. When she had locked and strapped it she sat down upon a trunk near by, panting and disheveled. Her figure was slender yet shapely, the contours ripe; there was nothing out of the ordinary about it; indeed, the mold was common to nine-tenths of American women. It was by her face, perhaps, that one might distinguish her from the ruck of millions, the commonplace. It was not beautiful, but it was singularly attractive.

She drew her sleeve across her damp forehead, flushed by her exertions, for it was the evening of a

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long, hot summer day. The pavements were throwing off the heat they had absorbed; and what little breeze came in through the open windows was tainted by the smell of water and dust and asphalt, and burdened with the thousand changeable, indescribable sounds of mechanisms, the voices of a great city.

From somewhere came the whining, discordant music of a hand-organ; and the young woman knew that near it happy, barelegged children were dancing. Children! There are some words which, when called into being, seem instantly to clothe themselves with bristling, stabbing points. The young woman winced. She who loved children, who was peculiarly familiar with the bewildering facets of their budding characters, she had forgotten them. What a horror she was to herself!

She flung up her head, slid from the trunk, snatched her hat from the bed, and put it on without so much as a glance into the mirror, which, in a young and comely woman, registers the sign that she is under some great emotional strain. She had made her calculations in cold blood; there was not even the shadow of love in her heart. Ah, if only love had swayed her, human and beautiful love, which gives everything and asks for nothing!

She crossed over to the bureau drawers, which were all out, and once again looked through them. Then she sought one of the windows and leaned against the casement. Each time she heard the

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ring of horse-shoes upon the asphalt she peered out eagerly, only to withdraw her head in disappointment.

"Why does he not hurry?"

It was twenty minutes past seven. If she was not out of the house before eight she was as good as lost. She shut her hands tightly and her teeth clicked. There was something in the tenseness of her expression that suggested she was throwing out her will, taking up invisibly a whip and beating the flanks of a jaded horse. A dray rumbled by; a taxicab sputtered noisily under the shadowy arch; a huckster's cart rattled eastward; and still the man did not come. Everything seemed to be fighting against her.

A tap sounded upon the panel of the door. She wheeled quickly, but remained where she was, undecided. The tap came again, with a little more emphasis. The girl cleared her throat.

"Come in."

The door opened.

"Oh, it is you, Mrs. Oliver!"

"Why, what's all this?" demanded the landlady, indicating the trunk and suit-case and the denuded walls.

"I am leaving in a few minutes. The rent of the piano has been paid to date. They will come for it to-morrow."

"Leaving? What in the world has happened?"

"I wish I could tell you, but I can't. I have lived three years in this room, and you have all been very good to me."

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"But I don't understand! Child, you are all alone, and I couldn't love you more if you were my own. Tell me what has happened and maybe I can help."

"Dear Mrs. Oliver, the only help is what I must give myself."

"You are running away to get married?"

"Do I look like it? No. I am running away from . . . myself! Please don't ask me questions. I should only lie to you. My determination is irrevocable. Some day I'll come back and tell you."

"You leave me with grave and terrible doubts," said the landlady in a troubled voice.

"Mrs. Oliver!"

"Well, this is life; this is a big and wicked city; I am old, and I know. You are young and pretty and alone." The landlady's motherhood, which was as comprehending as it was deep, yearned toward this girl, who had always remained aloof. The brood she gathered under her wing was composed of struggling artists and writers, but yonder chick had been hatched from a strange egg. "You can't tell me what the trouble is?"

"No." The girl turned quickly toward the window. Once more came the beat of iron shoes. A baggage-cart stopped at the curb. "The man for my things. I thought he never would come." She walked toward the door. The landlady stepped aside. The girl whirled unexpectedly and flung her arms around the surprised landlady and kissed her. "You have been so good to me!

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Good-by!" She flew out into the hall and down the stairs. "You will find a trunk and suit-case up-stairs. Please hurry," she said to the cartman, whom she met coming up the steps.

"All right, miss."

"I'll ride with you and give you the directions."

The man nodded. Five minutes later he got up beside his passenger and flicked the horse with a broken whip.

The girl looked up at the window. She saw the bulky figure of the landlady in silhouette, and a hard lump came into her throat. She had never been happy in that room, but sometimes she had known content.

Beautiful old square, so brave in history, once so brilliant in fashion, shunted to one side like a plaything which no longer amused the grown-up child called New York. It was only now, when she was going to leave it, that she realized how much she loved every stone of it. The electric lamps were blurred and the blue lances, grotesquely broken, danced absurdly. She knew that she was gazing through tears.

She focused her gaze upon the drooping head of the horse, and for a long time refused to look right or left. Shuffle-shuffle, shuffle-shuffle went the iron shoes. One was loose. She could hear the clink of it each time the animal lifted the hoof.

"Muggy weather," volunteered the cartman. "Th' ol' nag 'ain't got much gumption t'night."

She did not reply. She heard the sound of his voice, but the words fell meaningless against the

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stone wall around her thoughts. She was a weak and contemptible thing, no better than the painted woman in the street. Did one inherit moral as well as physical characteristics? Were there such things as sixteenths, thirty-seconds, sixty-fourths handed down from generation to generation? Was she merely a fractional reincarnation of her mother, who had run away from her father upon the plea of loneliness and neglect? She had been nine then; five years later, beaten, broken, dying, the mother had returned. And this wasn't lesson enough!

Her father! She thought of him with a tender smile. The poor benign dreamer, forever delving into scientific research, in the world but not of it, scarcely realizing that his wife had forsaken him, that he had a child to bring up! He had taken back the mother without a word of reproach, and an hour later the doctor had found him puttering among his retorts. Loneliness and neglect—that had been her mother's excuse, and with some justice. But what excuse had she, her mother's daughter?

"It 'll take half an hour, miss."

"Don't hurry the poor horse," she replied, mechanically.

The cartman shifted his quid and spat surreptitiously, concluding that his customer had been turned out for not paying her rent. It was no new story to him. Somebody was always moving, because it was cheaper to move than whack down the rent. Well, it was all grist to his mill; he

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had no preference. She was pretty; and generally it was the pretty ones who moved.

Two blocks farther on, before a house in one of the numbered streets, he drew up.

"Is this the place?"

"Yes."

She climbed down, ran up the steps, and rang the bell. The door opened shortly and she vanished into the hall. When the cartman laid the suit-case on top of the trunk he suggested that he wouldn't mind an extra ten cents for beer. It took "all th' water out o' yer hide, this weather."

He pocketed the tip and shuffled out of the house, out of her life, one of those shadow shapes which come and go without leaving the slightest impression on the memory.

The girl stood stock-still in the middle of the room until she heard the shuffle-shuffle of the poor old bag of bones that had once been a lively colt in the green fields. Into her tragic thoughts came strangely the thought of this horse. She had already forgotten the master, but she would always remember the horse. It was symbolical. Twenty years hence she would be like that, a bag of bones, all her spirit crushed, gray-haired, weak of eye, trembling. How distinct the dull portrait was!

All her life she had been poor; always she had grubbed. She had been denied the right of butterfly—to fly. Always they had been in debt. She had grown to dread the door-bell, for nine-tenths of the callers had been irascible bill-collectors, and the brunt of "shooing" them off

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had always fallen upon her young shoulders. Her father had no idea where his salary went. She had cooked the meals, washed the dishes, kept the house in order. The social life of the college town had been closed doors to her. The boys had naturally sought, with the careless cruelty of their kind, those girls who had pretty dresses, leisure, and who knew how to dance. What was it to them that she could play the Second Symphony if, on the other hand, she did not know the latest ragtime? She was pretty; but her hands were always red from housework and her dresses made-overs. Only two things had she plucked from this dreary life—education and music—and these haphazardly, due primarily to the kindness of the German professor of music, who loved the father and understood the child.

And then one day she had been thrown upon her own resources, unceremoniously, by death. When the little estate was settled up, the trifling insurance paid, the furniture sold, and the debts wiped out, there was for her a meager nine hundred dollars to begin the real battle of life with.

She hated the small city where she had known nothing but penury and humiliation, and so went to the metropolis.

For ten years she had studied under the loving care of the old Bavarian music-master, who, back in Munich, had ranked among the greatest instructors of his time. Finding himself too deeply involved in political intrigue, he had stolen away to America. He had discovered the soul in Ruth,

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and she became all his ambitions in one. His own peculiar genius had fired hers, even when she was a child, unconscious of what was stirring within. He drew wonderful pictures for her. At the end of the road were wealth and fame.

To possess genius and yet to fail in attainment because of a trifling physical defect called nerves! She could not play before an audience; she could not even accompany a singer with any success. Yet, in a manager's office, all the yearning, all the poetry and romance in her soul, flooded her fingertips. To hear the applause of the multitudes, to walk and live among the great, to be indeed one of them, to taste the sweetest fruit in life, real success! In the manager's office, prior to her last and complete failure, she met Norton Colburton.

Meantime, during her trials, she had tried clerkship in the big shops, given music-lessons, and by qualification and the assistance of her fathers late confrères she had eventually obtained a post in a public school, hating the work, yet sticking to it doggedly, as it meant not only financial independence, but personal liberty.

All these broken pictures passed through her mind as the shuffle-shuffle of the horse died away—old, bent, gray, wrinkled, the political mother of an endless stream of noisy, restless children. All these years of drudgery for what? Food, clothes, roof—little else! But what were twenty or thirty years of drudgery if, among them, there were three or four into which all the luxuries

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of life might be crowded? The devil always uses this argument; it is the best he has.

The disembodied spirit of the girl crept back into the sordid bedroom. Then imagination took up the thread where retrospection had laid it down.

She saw a limousine stop before the house in Washington Square, perhaps twenty minutes after she had left it. Out of the car jumped a man in evening clothes. A fine Panama gave a rakish touch to his dark, handsome head. There was eagerness in his step as he hurried up to the door and rang the bell. His pose as he waited reminded one of Romeo, or Lothario, or the devil in mufti; it all depended on whether one saw him through the eyes of a romantic young girl, a poor young man, or the shade of Virgil. Under his arm he carried a long, narrow box such as florists use. He smiled.

Presently she saw the landlady open the door.

"Miss Warren?"

"She is gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"When will she return?"

"She will not return. She has left for good."

He laid the flowers on the stand. "Will you be so good as to tell me exactly what has happened?"

"I have not the least idea. She left twenty minutes ago, bag and baggage. If you will leave your address . . ."

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"It would be useless," he interrupted, with unexpected curtness. "Good evening!" He opened the door himself and went out into the street. "Club!" he directed, entering the limousine and slamming the door.

All these pictures were dreadfully vivid to Ruth. It seemed as though she was living through every scene again, through all the pain and the shame of it. She put aside these recollections suddenly and energetically. Her life was in danger; she must waste no vitality in useless retrospection. She looked out of the rear window of her prison. Always there was a Chinaman in the door of the outhouse, always covertly watching her window. They? Who were they who were to come for her? At ten that night this riddle was solved.

Colburton came in quietly and stood with his back to the door.

"You?" she whispered across the bed behind which she had taken refuge at the sound of the turning key. For a space the walls of the room warped fantastically. As they steadied down and became normal again she slowly reached for one of her hatpins. She could die.

But Colburton did not approach her; he remained where he was.

"Weren't expecting me, then?"

"No. I hadn't thought you quite so base as this." The sight of this man stiffened her spine. But she determined to see if there was not some

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decency left in his soul. "Better let me go, Norton. No good can possibly come of this. You'll be sorry. There must be some good in you, just enough not to let you do such a horrible thing as this. To bring me to such a house! Oh! You had better let me go."

"I offered you marriage in Venice, and you declined it. I was a fool, I suppose, but I meant it that morning. Now you're going to come to me of your own free will."

"No. You forget one thing."

"And what's that?"

"I can always die. I'm not your kind."

"You are going to be," he said, quietly. "Die? They always talk of dying, but they don't. Oh, you need not tremble! I sha'n't lay a hand on you until you come to me. I might have put you on board the yacht, but I did not think it would pay. You had to be broken first."

"I can not be kept here forever."

"I can and will keep you here until you break. No woman ever played your game successfully with me."

She knew now from his tone that he was without mercy. "But how many games have you played with women? Let us speak the truth to each other. When I first met you I thought you might inspire me with love."

He interrupted. "And when you learned that I couldn't, you said good-by, didn't you? Yes, let us speak the truth. You thought it over carefully. I could feather your nest comfortably.

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You took my gifts and permitted an occasional caress to keep the fire in me. . . . Ah, I know all about you, Ruth. I sent back to your little college town. I know your pedigree. You're cut from the same pattern as your mother, only, she made a bargain and kept it. You let me go to the extent of purchasing a certain kind of trousseau. You made a bargain, and then you played the cheat. Yes, let us speak the truth while we're about it. And then that night at Juneau's you ran away from me without any explanation."

"Cheat? To a certain extent, yes. But do you want the real explanation? I will give it to you. When you put my coat on that night I saw you in the mirror. You smiled and winked at the head-waiter as if I'd been a woman you had just picked up in the street."

"So that was it!" Colburton sensed chagrin.

"Yes, that was it. I had up to that moment believed you really cared for me. I was very unhappy. I had failed in the great object of my life—I had failed utterly. I turned to you. I did not care what became of me. Up to the moment I looked into that mirror I was ready to go with you. I did not love you, but I might have. I would have kept to the letter of my bargain. Well, in the mirror I saw everything. I knew instantly the kind of man you were. *You* would not have kept to the letter of your bargain. And a little later I should have been no better than the the poor things who live in these houses until they go to the hospitals to die. But God did not

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intend that I should go that way—be your kind."

"You will be before you leave this house," he replied, moodily.

"I can always kill myself."

"How?"

She smiled. He did not like that smile. He was a little afraid of her.

"You have only to put your hand on me to test my earnestness."

"You kept the pearls," he said, a queer look in his eyes.

"So I did. I took them in payment for that smile of yours. Oh, I offer no excuses for what I have done. It was all cold-blooded. Twenty times I was on the point of sending back those pearls. Do you think my conscience never bothered me?"

"Did it ever occur to you that I could have had you arrested for theft? You took something of which, at that time, you had no right."

"Yes; it occurred to me that morning in Venice. You were trying to separate us. Perhaps that was your tale to the carabinieri."

"Ah! our red-headed friend? Where is he?"

"He'll find me; never doubt that."

"Will he? Will he want to find you? Men are not friendly for nothing."

"His kind are."

"I'll break you, Ruth. I haven't been called a hell-rake for nothing. I'll break you. I've all the time in the world. You'll come to me; wait and see. And I wouldn't put any stake on that Irish friend.

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By this time he believes you've eloped with Camden."

"Camden?"

"Why, yes. Camden's the cleverest man in his way I know. When you ran away I sent him after you. I gave him your photograph. And here you are!"

"Camden!" she repeated, dully.

"Yes. Can't you see that you've eloped with him?"

"With my luggage on board and all my money with Mr. Grogan? Nobody will believe that."

"Sometimes women run away without their hats. You were coming to me with little else. Your Irishman will prove a human being like the rest. I shouldn't wait too long for him. Good night."

Her hell now became a definite one. Some night he would come in wine, and then God help her!

On the tenth night he did come in wine. He walked toward her without parley, and she saw what lay in his eyes. She prayed silently and ran around behind the bed. He ran after her, laughing. She drew out a hatpin and struck at him blindly. It bit deeply into his arm, but he was too deep in wine to feel the pain. He caught her by the wrist and wrenched the pin from her grasp, and tossed it out of the window. The second hatpin was not long in following

She fought him like a tigress. She buried her teeth in his hand, scratched and kicked him. She

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fought with all the weapons she had, as all women fight when their honor is at stake. And it *was* her honor. Finally he succeeded in getting her in his arms. He kissed her so roughly that her lips bled. He then jumped back beyond the bed, still laughing.

It was here that William came in, haggard but bright-eyed.

CHAPTER XXIII

AFTER William had spoken to Ruth there was a second tableau which lasted about two minutes. The girl was holding herself up by the last shred of her will. Now that the danger was over, now that the horrible hours of suspense were done with, it seemed as though every nerve in her body had gone slack, like violin strings suddenly touched by night dampness. He had come! All along she had known that he would come. The confidence which this prescience had instilled in her heart had stood like a rock between her and self-destruction. "Call to me, and I'll come." He had said that.

The smile on Colburton's face slowly faded. His mind, fuddled by wine and dizzied by the fury of the recent struggle, refused to accept as a reality the advent of this Irishman. It was not humanly possible for him to be in this room, to arrive at this precise moment. Colburton made a slight gesture, as if to dismiss the apparition.

Then William moved. He walked backward to the door, found the key, transferred it to the inside, and turned it. A hysterical sob rose and died in Ruth's throat. She had never thought of running to the door while struggling with Colbur-

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ton. She saw William drop the key into a pocket. There was nothing hasty about his movements; all was deliberately done; and this very deliberateness held the other man in thralldom.

"I've got something here that belongs to you."

With an unexpected gesture William flung the chamois bag into Colburton's face. The thread snapped; the pearls cascaded to the floor and bounded and ran about.

William drew off his coat and flung it aside; and then Colburton knew that what he saw was made of solids. Trapped!

"Don't . . . don't kill him!" whispered Ruth. She could not stand any more horrors.

"Kill him? Not much! But I'm going to put the fear of God in his heart, believe me. . . ."

"Look out!" she warned.

William laughed as he leaped forward. Colburton succeeded in drawing the automatic, but not in leveling it. William gripped Colburton's wrist and shook it. The weapon fell near the bed.

"Pick that up, sister; it may come in handy later."

Ruth laid the automatic on the bed.

"Well, Handsome-Is, we meet again. You call yourself a white man!"

William struck, not with the fist, but with the palm. A clenched hand, used with the same force, would have knocked Colburton down. He was a rogue, but he was not a physical coward as is usual with men in his breed. But he knew that

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for once he would need the strength of ten men and the cunning of a were-wolf.

"Millions, huh? Call on them, white man!" snarled William.

Instinctively Colburton knew what those palms promised in the way of torture. Nothing stings like the flat of the human hand. A blow of the fist numbs and bruises, but the palm crucifies the nerves, keeps them alive and dancing with pain.

It was a singular combat, Colburton smashing out blindly and hopelessly, and William using only his palms. They were terrible buffets. Bare knuckles would have been merciful in comparison. Thwack! thwack! across the eyes, the mouth, the nose, the cheeks, and the side of the head, all stinging like hell fire. Some of Colburton's wild blows got home, but so savage was William's mood that he scarcely felt them. His eyes were like polar ice; his cruelty was feline. Into this corner and that Colburton stumbled, soon half-blind, cursing and sobbing. Duck and dodge as he would he could not escape those palms. He flung chairs at William's feet; he tipped over the table and the supper-tray; he picked up and threw small objects, more or less accurately. One of these, a little bronze god for incense sticks, struck William on the forehead, laying it open. But none of these efforts served. The blows kept falling. To the girl the impact of those palms was like pistol-shots.

There was another sound; only the girl heard it—the snap of the pearls as the scuffling boots

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crunched them into powder. Her subsequent act had no meaning; she was not conscious of it. She stooped and gathered those pearls which had rolled to her feet, all the while her direct gaze never leaving the two men. She stood up, the pearls clutched tightly in her hand.

In Udaipur she had seen a spectacular battle between an enormous tiger and a leopard which had accidentally strayed into the tiger's den. To her mind, shocked from its balance by the happenings of this night, William began to assume the shape of that tiger, and Colburton became the leopard. Presently she cried out. She could not stand the sight or sound any longer.

"Don't! don't!" she begged. "Let him go!"

Mercy? How like a woman that was! William heard the call and understood. She wanted mercy for the man, now that he was reeling about, beaten. Mercy? Had Colburton ever shown any? Did he know what the word meant? How many women had begged mercy hopelessly at the feet of this man? And so William began to strike for them. His hands were red and beginning to swell.

"God! kill me, kill me!" sobbed the wretch.

"The door!" Ruth screamed. "They are breaking in the door!" She saw the panels warp.

William drew back for the real finishing blow, when Colburton stumbled, struck his temple against the marble top of the bureau, and crumpled up.

At the same moment the door crashed inward

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and five husky Chinamen crowded over the threshold. With a deep sense of chagrin William understood that in his pitiless vengeance he had overreached. Five! Their thick, yellow torsos were naked.

With a Herculean effort William stooped and picked up the insensible victim and hoisted him to the front as a bulwark. He did not wait. He was a true fighting-man, and he knew from experience that generally the first blow decided a rough-and-tumble conflict. He rushed Colburton's body straight toward the Orientals, who stopped, not knowing how to handle such a manoeuver. William heaved the body forward as from a catapult. The yellow men were bowled about like tenpins. One made a frantic endeavor to catch Colburton; but he lost his footing and both he and his burden crashed against the banister, which gave. There was a wild yell, and the two bodies disappeared.

The remaining four, recovering quickly, rushed forward. Had they been Japs William would have gone out broken or dead. But the Chinese are not athletes, they are not natural fighters. They do well enough in numbers if armed; but they possess an inherent distaste for the white man's methods of using his fists.

William never missed a point in this game of fists and wits. He fought with his head quite as much as with his hands. They call that generalship in the ring. He had stamina, skill, and brains. No doubt, had he taken up the sport as a

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business instead of a pastime, he would have found a distinguished niche in the sporting pages of the newspapers. But he fought for the fun of it when necessity did not compel him to fight otherwise.

William mapped out his campaign without an instant's hesitation. He had played the fool with Colburton; he had forgotten where he was or that the man would have henchmen somewhere about the house. Moreover, he was tired, and he could not close his puffed hands as tightly as he would have liked. He must keep the yellow devils in front, near the door, where he could see them all. If one succeeded in getting in the rear, out of range, that would be the wind-up. Sticking to his tactics of carrying the fight to the enemy, he ran to meet the onrush, crying out his final advice to Ruth.

"When I got 'em outside, be ready to shove the bed against the door. If I fall, shoot to kill!"

"Dear God!" cried Ruth. She couldn't help him; she had all she could do to stand and she hardly knew which end of the automatic was the death-dealing one.

As the battle against odds began, she recalled in a flash that curious desire of hers, one day in Naples, to see this Irishman fighting with his bare fists for his life. From her vantage on the far side of the bed she watched this incredible contest. She was in the grip of a trance. It was not possible to stir. She was conscious of being able to breathe with difficulty—that was all. One hand

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held the automatic, the other still clutched the pearls.

The shock of the bodies, the panting, the shaking of the floor—it was like a scene transposed from the *Iliad*. The oil-lamp (which had in the previous battle escaped miraculously) contributed a weird theatricality to the movement of the struggling group, throwing it here into dead, black shadow, there into flashes of yellow-white.

And all for her! She had dreamed of such moments, but life itself had been singularly free of thrills. Men had fought for her in her day-dreams, sometimes with rapier, sometimes with lance, sometimes with musket at the cabin's loop-holes, and just as the last shot had sped they had heard the bugle of the cavalry. It was very pleasant to dream like that. But this! . . .

He was like a madman; he was here, there, everywhere, unexpectedly, jabbing, swinging, heaving. Frequently there was a screech of ripping cloth. His shirt was hanging on his shoulders in shreds and streamers. It was impossible to follow his arms clearly; all she could identify was that shock of red hair surging among the swinging pigtails.

All at once he tripped and went down, and she was sure that the end had come. But no! There he was, like a swimmer caught and buried for a second by a toppling surge. This time he broke away from the milling, yellow bodies. He clutched the teak stand, heavy and tough, and swung it high above his head.

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The yellow men paused; and well they might. They had been sent against a man; but yonder blue-eyed was not a man, he was a half-god, for all his bloody face, for all his tatters. They had had enough. As William whirled the stand and let go, they broke and made for the hallway. William slammed the door and leaned against it.

"The bed!" he cried, thickly.

How she was able to push it against the door was something she never could explain. The instant this feat was accomplished she fell upon the bed in a faint. William did not turn to her at once. He hauled the bureau over to the foot of the bed and stood it endways. To open the door now they would have to push out the side of the house.

He then turned to Ruth. Her arms lay extended on each side. The pearls had run into the depression made by the hand which had held them. Pearls! His expression became grim and sad. She had picked them up while he had fought for her liberty and honor. He was seized with a violent desire to go about the room and crush all the pearls he could find, stamp and twist his heel upon them. Instead, he rubbed her wrists energetically. After a little while she opened her eyes.

"All right now, sister?" He was breathing deep and fast. He bolstered her up with the pillows, and she smiled wanly. "Gee! if I'd only had one of those *Ajax* beefsteaks under my vest, I'd have cleaned 'em up in jig-time. Some little

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scrap, though, believe me—some . . . little . . . scrap!"

He sat down on the bed and held his head in his hands. He was groggy and a bit sick at his stomach. He had had nothing to eat since morning. One of his small ribs hurt badly; an eye was closed; his tongue found a loose tooth. If they had come at him once again and the teak stand had failed to stop them! . . .

The next thing he knew she was standing at his side, one arm around his head, and a cool towel was being tenderly applied to his burning, throbbing face.

"I wasn't worth it!" he heard her say. "I wasn't worth it!"

He looked up.

"Aw, sister! It's all over. That rat 'll never bother you again."

"That isn't it." And then she told him the whole sordid story.

It was not a very coherent tale, but he understood. To him there was nothing sordid in it. It was human, every-day temptation.

"Aw, what are you worrying about? Don't we all stumble around most of the time? Aren't we all good and bad in spots? Sure. Some time or other everybody gets the idea that the easy route's the only one left. The thing is to get back in time. You did that."

She tied the towel around his forehead and stepped off a little way.

He was as broad in the mind as he was in the

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shoulders. He continued. "Why shouldn't you want good things to wear, clothes and all that? Don't we all want something just a little better than we've got? Sure. And then, you'd gone through a pretty tough disappointment. You had musical genius, and you couldn't make it lie down and roll over. That 'd make any one kind of desperate. You ran into that skunk the wrong time—that was all. He was handsome, he had money, and he was smooth. Being a genius, you've got one of those consciences that was worse 'n none at all. Always sticking pins in you—huh? No human being ever lived that didn't think bad once in a while. But thinking and doing 's two different things. It's stepping back that brings home the bacon; and you . . . stepped back. Say, do you know what to-night is?" He smiled. It was the smile of a gargoye.

"No. I've forgotten to keep track of the days."

"Well, it's little old Christmas Eve, and I'm as homesick as . . . as hell! Can't you see the good old clean snow coming down, and the Salvation Army Santy Claus hopping about to keep his feet warm and watching the nickels and dimes dropping into his kettle? Huh? And the kids with their little red smellers pasted against the toy-shop windows? 'I choose that!' Can't you hear 'em arguing? Aw, little old New York on Christmas Eve!"

"Don't." Her throat filled suddenly, and she was very close to a passionate storm of tears.

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It would have been well for her if she had cried abandonedly.

"To-morrow we're going to have the greatest Christmas spread they can turn out at Raffles's. And after that we're going to see how fast we can get back to those two chairs behind the deck-houses. The old *Ajax*—huh? I could have cried when I had to leave her at Hong-Kong."

"Why did you come back for me?" The question came involuntarily.

"You want to know?" He looked down at his swollen hands. "Well, because I love you, not like a brother, but like a man who loves one woman once in his life. I know. I'm not exactly your kind. I grew up among the rough-necks, maybe. My education's a joke. But I'll tell you this much: if they'd dragged you down to hell before I got here, I'd 've gone down into hell and dragged you back. You're a good woman. What's one mistake? . . . Will you marry me?"

He dared not look at her. He continued to stare at his hands. The towel, drawn a bit too tightly, dripped water which trickled down the end of his nose.

Who shall say that these were not the first honest words of love ever spoken in this drab house of bondage? This thought came into the girl's mind as she gazed down at his head. She was dreadfully tired. . . . Some one to take care of her, some one who loved her to stand between her and all future buffets, to wait upon her and to serve her. Why not? She felt that all her for-

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tresses had been smashed; there was not a single barrier; there was neither dream nor illusion left.

There was a long interval of silence.

"I . . . I will marry you," she said.

I have remarked that William was fine in the grain, and that the harsh environments of his earlier years had not in any way coarsened that grain. All he did was to reach out, take her hand in his, and pat it. The most natural act in the world would have been to take her in his arms and kiss her. He merely patted her hand. Why? Because he knew that Ruth did not love him. Later you will understand the supreme sacrifice he had in mind when he made that proposal.

"All right, sister. We'll hunt up the parson to-morrow. But just now suppose we think up some way of getting out of this shebang? Where's your sleeve?"

She found it by the window.

"Got any pins? We'll have to patch up a bit; can't go into the streets like this."

She plucked some pins from the cushion on the bureau. As he touched the cool flesh of her arm he trembled. He was going to fight a battle beside which the recent one was as nothing. Would he be strong enough to win it? Maybe, with God's help. After the sleeve had been pinned on he got his coat.

"Where's the revolver? Here it is, on the bed. Gee! but I'm a hick with these things. I couldn't hit the broadside of an elephant. But *they* won't know that."

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He turned the automatic over and over in his hands, curiously. But he was a natural mechanic, and it wasn't long before he had mastered the mechanism of the gun.

"All aboard!"

"The pearls," she said, dully.

"What?" He stared at her, dumfounded. It was unbelievable. "You want them . . . *now?*"

"To return them. Oh, I couldn't live otherwise! I couldn't!"

He understood at once. She wanted a clean slate.

"But Camden stole them."

"So did I. I had no right to them. I tried a thousand times to convince myself that I had; but I really hadn't. I was just a cheat. I . . . I hadn't paid for them."

"How many did you have?"

"There were forty-eight in all. I unstrung them. I was going to sell one whenever I needed money."

"All right."

William crawled about on his hands and knees and eventually recovered thirty-two. The others were little white patches of dust on the thread-bare carpet.

"How much were they worth?" he asked, curiously.

"Twelve thousand, at least. I priced a necklace like it, and they said it was worth that."

A doctor would have given her a serious glance; but William was at this moment unobservant. Little beads like that worth twelve thousand!

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"That's a lot of money. Let's see; sixteen missing; something over four thousand. All right; a clean slate it is. We'll match 'em up and send 'em back. And now let's get out of this."

He pushed aside the bureau and bed and opened the door cautiously. The hallway was deserted. He beckoned to her to go on ahead. They went down the stairs quietly, pausing every other step to listen. As they reached the lower hall the door to the parlor opened about three inches. Instantly he leveled the automatic.

"No, no!" cried Ruth. "It's the little Japanese girl who was kind to me."

"G'by!" said Saki San, her almond-shaped eyelids as nearly round as they possibly could be. "Madame say you go damn fast velly well. G'by!" The door closed.

William and Ruth stepped out into the street.

CHAPTER XXIV

AND so they were married. No more romance, nothing but realities from now on; and some of these realities bitter and sad, and some of them touched with incomparable glory. No life moves forever on one level, no life is so drab that happiness does not pierce it somewhere, somehow.

Christmas, with a sky of faded blue and burning brass; dust, heat, enervation. Clouds came up quickly, there was the usual downpour of lukewarm rain; then more heat, more dust, more glare. To William it was an unbelievable Christmas. He saw not a single face in which the spirit of this day was manifest. . . . Snow blowing into his face with cold freshness; snow under his feet, sparkling on his coat, covering the trees in the park with fleecy mantles; cold, wind-driven snow; never had he been so homesick as on this. his wedding-day.

Two rings, a small diamond and a plain gold band, took all but eighteen dollars of his small store. But Ruth had a few hundred, and he could borrow from her until either they sent him his letter of credit or he went to Hong-Kong for it. So there was no financial worry in his mind. He knew that the diamond was a bit of sentimental

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foolishness, but he could not resist the temptation.

They were married at two o'clock, at the American mission. Never had the missionary officiated at a stranger wedding. In the first place, there was something in the bride's eyes that baffled him. They were more like the eyes of a person in a trance. The girl looked not at objects, but through them. And the man appeared to be all hands and feet; he could not move without blundering into something; and he spoke as if he was afraid of the sound of his voice. Besides, one of his eyes was discolored, his lips were bruised, a piece of court-plaster stretched diagonally across his forehead. The missionary decided that this was a plain case of mismating. The girl had beauty and breeding; the man had neither, though none could doubt the frank honesty of his blue eyes.

In other latitudes the missionary would have insisted upon knowing a little more of the family history, and in the event of their refusing to acquaint him with the facts which inclined them toward matrimony would have politely declined to act. But this was the Orient, a world where laxity disintegrated vigor, where all the mysterious kinks in human nature developed quickly and became the salients in character.

He took William aside, however, and asked him if the young lady was, or had been, ill.

"Ill? Why, no. But she's been through a lot of worry. She'll be all right when things settle down again."

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"Do you wish to marry this man? Are you acting of your own free will?" asked the missionary, as a final attempt to get at the truth.

Ruth stared out of the window at the patch of brilliant sunshine in the middle of the red dust of the compound. The pause was so long that the missionary began to fidget, and William's freckles grew deeper and deeper in hue. Why didn't she answer?

"Ruth?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon! Yes, I wish to marry Mr. Grogan."

With a sigh the missionary opened his book to the marriage ritual. Ruth spoke her affirmatives in a colorless tone. William had to clear his throat a dozen times.

"Now," said the missionary, smiling, after the gold band had been clumsily slipped over Ruth's finger, "we are all Americans. Why not have your Christmas dinner with us?"

"Thank you," said Ruth; "but we have planned to have our dinner at the Raffles." She wanted no curious strangers about. Her head was on fire, and she wanted to be alone, alone.

William's face expressed his disappointment. Strangers would have been most welcome to him. Now that the ceremony was over, a fear laid hold of him. Had he done right? Ought he not to have waited until Ruth had had a few days' rest?

"You'd better watch her," whispered the mis-

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sioner as he escorted this strange pair to the door. "I don't know what her worry is, but it strikes me that she is going to be ill."

"Ill?"

"Yes."

The missionary was now positive that the girl was not fully aware of the step she had taken. Confused and troubled, he let them go out into the compound before he recalled that he had not blessed them. He ran after, waving his hands. William's thought was that he had innocently given the missionary some bad money.

"I forgot to bless you, you poor children!"

William bent his head, but Ruth stared straight on.

Their dinner at Raffles's was sadder even than the wedding. Neither could eat; neither could talk; neither of them heard the cheerful Chinese table-boy repeat his "Melly Clistmus!"

William thought he understood what was going on in Ruth's mind. She was reviewing her life, her failures, and this final smash of all her woman's dreams. He knew. The man she had picked out in fancy did not in the least resemble William Grogan. He had not meant anything wrong; yet it was now evident that he had committed a crime—he had taken advantage of her helplessness, he had not given her a chance to recover her balance.

The more closely he looked into his act, the more reprehensible it became. Marriage! God help him, he saw clearly enough now that what

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in his generosity he had intended doing might have been done without tragedy. He had wrecked her future without benefiting his own in the least. He was a thousand times a fool. He no longer kept up the farce of self-deception; he had hoped that some day she might learn to care for him. Blind, unhappy fool! She would now hate him until the end of her days.

Ruth broke in upon these melancholy cogitations. "My head aches very badly. You won't mind if I go to my room?"

"Good Lord, no!"

He went with her to the room he had engaged for her.

"Where . . . where is your room?"

So she was worrying about that? "On the other side," he lied. "All your things are here. Now, sister, you lie down and take it easy. I'll drop in around about six. And maybe a rickshaw ride along the water-front 'll brace you up."

At six he returned to find her delirious. She did not recognize him. Terrified, he ran down to the office and asked for a doctor. When the doctor came he reported that it was a case of brain fever.

"Will she die?"

"That depends. Plenty of ice-packs, a good nurse, proper care, and there's a chance for her. She looks as if she had natural vitality. Your wife?"

"Yes." Brain fever! God was already beginning his punishment.

"I take it, Mr. Grogan, that you're a tourist, so

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I'll see to the nurse and order the ice myself. It's a good thing it's winter. I'll have a punka rigged up for the daytime. Until I return you will apply cold compresses; that is, wet the towel frequently and lay it upon her head. Don't be afraid if it drips."

"How long will it last?"

"If it's a slight attack, two or three weeks; if it is serious, a month or more. It depends upon the severity of the congestion—what kind of mental trouble brought it on. But don't get worried; just keep saying to yourself that she's going to pull through, and she will."

All through the long night William sat by the bed. Sometimes he cracked the artificial ice for the nurse, or he put Ruth's threshing arms under the coverlet, or he stood listening to her incoherent babble, hoping in vain to hear his own name. It was of a past he knew but little—the days with her father.

"Go to bed, Mr. Grogan," advised the nurse when three o'clock came around. "You need sleep, lots of it, if you're going to help me. You'll have to do something in watching during the day, until the crisis is past."

William had not engaged any room for himself at the hotel. His idea had been to seek out some near-by boarding-house. He wanted to leave Ruth with a sense of absolute freedom. She alone was registered, and only as Miss Warren. In other parts of the world this would have complicated affairs, but not in Singapore.

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Dumbly he went down to the outside café and sat in one of the wicker chairs. He fell asleep almost immediately. He was aroused at dawn by the Chinese scrubs.

Up-stairs there was no change. The nurse slept on a cot in the veranda, while William watched and changed the ice-packs until nine. The nurse then relieved him.

He began to consider his finances. He had thirty-six rupees—about twelve dollars. Ruth's checks would be so much waste paper until she could properly indorse them. If she died . . . No; God wouldn't do that! And he had believed that trip to Hong-Kong and return the worst hell that could be meted out to him. He had only stepped into the anteroom. Twelve dollars! His only hope lay in the promise of the consul-general.

He went back to the annex of the hotel, where the offices of the American consulate were located, and asked to see the consul-general.

"He is away," said the clerk.

"When will he be back?"

"I can't say. In a week, maybe; he may stay a fortnight. The Sultan of Johore is giving a hunting party. The consul-general left rather unexpectedly last night. But there is seldom anything of importance going on in Singapore at this time of the year."

"Seldom anything of importance!" repeated William, sitting down because a strange attack at his knees made it impossible for him to stand.

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"Can I do anything for you?"

"I don't know. My wife is in the hotel, down with brain fever. I have about twelve dollars. My letter of credit is in Hong-Kong, and I can't get it until the consul-general backs up my identity."

"Give me all the details and I'll see what can be done. It will be impossible to reach the chief by telegraph. They go miles up north into the jungles."

William gave the clerk the essential details, and to verify these the clerk inspected the chief's desk calendar: "Memo. Write Cook Hong-Kong relative W. Grogan's letter of credit." The clerk was glad to run across this memorandum; it gave some color to the story.

"I'm afraid he went away without sending that letter. A cable would do no earthly good in a case like this. By this time Cook's people must be up in the air, and the consulate seal would be necessary before they would surrender the letter. I'm sorry, but I have no authority to act."

"I don't care about myself. If I was sure everything would be all right with her, I could manage to shift somehow."

The clerk chewed the end of his lead-pencil. He did not know how to act. Not a day passed that some clever rogue did not try to put through a bit of fraud. He himself had been imposed upon several times, and the word "money" sent him back into his shell. Yet this chap had the identi-

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fication-book representing the ownership of six hundred pounds, and the chief himself had made a memorandum on his calendar.

"I'll tell you what. Stick to the hotel. They won't bother you with any bill for a couple of weeks, and by that time the chief will be home. Frankly, in this half-way port you don't trust everybody. There's a lot of strange driftwood floating around, and we have our eyes open. I've been stung a dozen times. You stick to the hotel. If they come to you with any bill before the chief returns, hunt me up and I'll try to explain to the management."

"That's pretty white."

"You're welcome. Over here about all we do is to straighten out financial tangles for tourists—and they are always losing money and trunks; ship broken sailors back home; and play charity generally, and no thanks. Anyhow, I'll take a chance. Drop in once in a while and let me know how things work out."

"Sounds pretty good to hear some one talk United States. Thanks."

William returned to the office of the hotel and engaged the cheapest room he could find. On the morrow he would look around for a job—that is, if Ruth were no worse.

From eleven until three he stood his watch while the nurse slept. Man and wife, he mused; the yellow-bird wedded to the crow. What would she do, how would she act, when she came back from this no-land where fevered fancies go?

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Maybe she'd forgive him when she understood everything.

The doctor called. The temperature had not gone any higher, and this was an encouraging sign. Bravely William laid bare his financial predicament. No matter what happened, he was not going to sail under false colors. The doctor told him to put such worries into the background, or there'd be two patients instead of one.

"There's a lot of white men in this world, after all."

"I'll wager," replied the doctor, putting away his thermometer. "When you're in trouble you find out where they are. To-night or to-morrow night we'll come to the crisis. You see, every case of brain fever is individual. No two persons are affected exactly alike. If the fever goes no higher by to-morrow night, then we can breathe easier. It may hang right where it is for a long time, or it may recede at once. You never can tell. To-night and to-morrow night I'll take turns with the nurse, and you can sleep. If a serious turn comes, I'll send for you. She's quieter now."

Ruth's left arm lay outside the coverlet. William laid his hand upon the forearm. It was dry and hot. He raised it gently to put it back under the coverlet, when the two rings caught his eye. The sight of them gave birth to a Quixotic idea. Slowly he slipped off the rings and dropped them into a pocket. When she came to her senses his act would at least save her the shock of immediate

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recollection. She need never know until she was strong enough.

The next day, his heart big with misery, William went forth in search of a job. He was obsessed with the idea that he must find some way to make money. It was all right for the doctor and the nurse to trust him, but sooner or later he must have money. There was always the possibility of the consul-general getting killed on that hunting expedition. And then where would he be?

First he sought the few plumbing establishments. They thought he was joking at first, and laughed pleasantly; but when he declared his seriousness they informed him that there was no chance for any but the native. No white man could work for the native wage. Then he tried the hardware-shops and ship-chandlers—natives. It was not pride on William's part; he would have dug trenches with the devil himself if there had been a white man's wage in it. His idea was to get enough ready cash to cable Burns. He dared not ask the doctor to lend him money. The man might turn about and refuse to trust him further. And the clerk at the consulate had hinted that he could not afford to lend anything except his good will, and William was grateful enough for even that. He must find a white man's wage for a week or so. *Must.*

He returned to the hotel at noon. Ruth's condition was unchanged. He remained two hours at the bedside, then renewed his quest for work. At five he found himself on one of the

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piers. What drew him toward a group of white men he did not know. It was one of those mysterious "hunches." Perhaps it was their excited gestures. At any rate, he approached. Three of the men were officers off some vessel in the harbor, and the fourth was a landsman.

"I tell you Jason's gone to the palace at Johore. He's the only expert I've got, the only man in Singapore who could handle your work just now. The Sultan is installing new plumbing. It's a four or five weeks' job, and I can't call him back for a job that isn't worth more than three thousand rupees, probably a good deal less."

"But, man, can't you dig up some one for us? We can't wait for your expert to return and we can't put to sea with fresh-water tanks aleak and the piping broken God knows where! I can't afford to have any native tinkering around my ship. It's no ordinary job. Why can't you handle it personally?"

"Simply because while I manage a shop I'm no expert plumber. Jason is probably the only man in Singapore who knows anything about ship plumbing."

Ship plumbing! William's heart leaped thunderously. So much depended upon his address. He called it bluff. He would have exchanged a year of his life for ten minutes of that old fearlessness. If he could keep his voice steady, mask his anxiety. . . . He stepped forward.

"Pardon me, but are you looking for an expert plumber? I'm one."

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The four turned upon him abruptly and rather resentfully. They were English. Hidebound in their dislike and suspicion of all things which did not conform with routine, they instantly looked upon William as an impertinent bounder. But William's bold front and good clothes dissipated their first impression that he might be a beach-comber. One of the officers saw him for exactly what he was, an idle tourist. He decided in this instance to discount formality in favor of common-sense.

"You are an American, I fancy?"

"I am, and I'm an expert plumber. Couldn't help overhearing your talk. I've nothing to do, so I thought I might be able to help you out. It's dull between boats, and Raffles's isn't a lively joint just now. And I know something about the insides of a ship."

Which was perfectly true. Like all skilled mechanics, William was of an investigating trend. He could pass a Corregio or a Titian without a thrill; but a piece of strange machinery hypnotized him. Due to the friendliness of the *Ajax's* chief engineer, William had familiarized himself with that marvelous network of pipes which sprawls hither and yon between the decks of all big sea-going steamers until he knew them as the lines in his palm. So he was not throwing his dice blindly.

The chief engineer—for William recognized his stripes—looked at his watch. After all, the situation was quite as unusual as this young man's

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offer. It was no time to dodder, unless he wanted to lay up in port for weeks. It might be that he had fallen into a bit of genuine luck.

"Five o'clock. I suppose I'll have to take a chance. Step aboard the launch, Mr. —"

"Grogan—William Grogan, of Burns, Dolan & Co., New York."

"Glad if you can help us."

"You've got a good working-plan of the piping?"

"Yes. Queer game. Usually the carpenter and the assistant engineer could have handled the job. They left the ship at Saigon. Lascar crew—good servants, good sailors, but not up to a job like this. And everybody in Singapore is on some other job. Worse luck!"

At seven o'clock William had located the vital spots. The port side of the main deck, forward and amidship, would have to be torn up. The job would take perhaps eight or ten days. He would depend upon the manager for helpers. He would give his services as expert for two hundred dollars; they could accept it or decline it, as they pleased. The manager, seeing his profits dwindling—but forgetting that he was in luck to have any profits—swore roundly that the price was exorbitant.

"Give it and have done arguing," cried the chief engineer. "We're in a bally rotten hole, and this chap seems able to help us out. The whole job will come to about two hundred pounds. Our lines give you a deal of business, man, and for

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once I fancy you can cut down your profits a little to save us time."

The manager finally agreed to the terms, and William started back to town. The sweat he wiped from his forehead could not be charged to the heat. Two hundred dollars! There was something in this Irish luck, after all.

On the day William pocketed his precious forty pounds Ruth opened her eyes sanely. William came into the room just as he had left the ship. His finger-nails were broken and grimed, his face was streaked with sweat and dust, his clothes were covered with oil-stains and emanated the odor of gasoline, and his beard was three days old. When he saw sanity in her glance, he broke down; and the nurse, fearful that his emotion might upset the patient, ordered him from the room.

In a little while he begged the nurse to let him come back; he promised he'd make no noise, that he would not touch the patient; all he wanted was to see if he was really recognized. It was hard for the nurse to deny this man anything, now that she knew him.

"Just for a minute," she said. "She must have absolute quiet."

William tiptoed to the bed. "Do you know me, sister?"

Sister? He called her that? Had it been a dream, then? But Ruth was too weak and tired to think. She smiled a little and closed her eyes.

As troubles never come singly, neither do the good things. The consul-general returned from

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his hunting trip, despatched documentary evidence sufficient to establish William's right to his letter of credit, explained the situation to the management of the Raffles's, and William's financial difficulties became recollections. He had his trunk and grips brought down to the room adjacent to Ruth's, and his only care was to wait upon her, to share through the nights the burdens of the nurse, and to assume a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. Never he failed to call Ruth sister; never by word or sign did he refer to the past. When the day came when she was able to walk alone he would tell her. It was going to be very, very hard; but he had tightened up his resolve to a point where no self-interest could weaken it. He would tell her the plain, honest truth.

The slowness of Ruth's convalescence rather baffled the doctor. Apparently this young wife did not care whether she got well or not. There was none of the usual fretting over staying in bed; she seemed content to lie there upon her pillows. The doctor, however, did not confide this fact to William.

Two weeks passed before Ruth was able to sit in a chair. They carried her out to the wide verandagallery whence she could view the lovely panorama of the harbor. And hour after hour she sat there, staring at the ships as they came in or went out to sea.

During the hours of delirium the nurse had managed to pick up enough odds and ends of the truth to form a coherent story. And all her sym-

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pathies went out to the man. The moment he came into the room he radiated love. It beamed from his eyes, it was in the touch of his big, clumsy, toil-stained hands, it was manifest in his unforgetfulness. All day long he labored in the heat; but he never was too weary to spend half the night at the bedside. The nurse wondered what kind of vitality it was this man drew upon, since, visibly, he had no way of renewing it.

Immediately Ruth regained consciousness, however, the nurse was keen to note the change in the man. The love was there, but he hid it, repressed it, stifled it. This part of the mystery the nurse could not solve.

One day, when she was able to walk about, Ruth asked—in fact, she had been wanting to ask the question for some time, but until now could not push her courage to the point—if she had had any rings on her hands when taken ill.

“Yes. I believe Mr. Grogan took them off for fear you might lose them,” said the nurse. “You flung your arms about a good deal. You’re a lucky woman, Mrs. Grogan. How that man loves you! Of course, you know that he had no money. He went out and found work. He’d work all day and watch at your bed nearly all night. Sometimes he fell asleep in the chair, and I would not disturb him until breakfast. For ten days he worked from six in the morning until five in the afternoon, and the pity of it, it wasn’t needful. But he thought he just had to have money. He didn’t know that the doctor and I

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understood, or that the doctor had quietly informed the office of the circumstances. We let him work because if he didn't have something to occupy his hands he would have fallen ill from sheer worry. He'd got the idea that in this part of the world nobody trusted any one. Well, we don't, everybody. But all we had to do was to look into his eyes."

The nurse, after freshening up Ruth's pillow, went back into the bedroom to make the bed.

From the rickshaw-stand in the court below the veranda Ruth could hear the Chinese boys laughing and talking in their queer gutturals. Occasionally one hailed a prospective passenger. From the sea came the deep-throated warning of an approaching steamer. Ruth stared at the fingers of her left hand. All the puzzling mysteries vanished, all the cobwebs of doubt blew away. She was married. She was Mrs. William Grogan.

Invalids are always the most selfish of individuals. Being an invalid Ruth thought of *herself* only, *her* misery, the whole dreary failure *she* had made of life. And God had not been kind enough to let her die! Married! She was Mrs. William Grogan. He had taken advantage of her helplessness, her mental unbalance, for when she had left that hideous place in Malay Street she had not been strictly accountable for her subsequent acts. Mrs. Grogan!

She barely noticed him when he came in that night. He attributed her demeanor to weariness. He was not especially quick-witted to-night; his

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thoughts were more or less engaged in going over that afternoon's adventure.

Now that the extraordinary troubles of life had simmered down into the matter-of-fact, every-day affairs—now that Ruth was on the way back and there was money in his pocket—it occurred to William that he would like to know what had become of the man Colburton. After an unsuccessful series of inquiries he finally decided that the only avenue open was the house in Malay Street, and thither he directed his steps, careless of the fact that his hour was irregular, indifferent if any saw him. He wanted news and he was not particular how this news was acquired.

The woman he desired most to see answered his ring. She was not going to let him in, believing his visit of a hostile nature.

"Keep that door open," he said. "I want some questions answered, and I want them answered straight. I could give you a taste of the British jail here if I wanted to."

"What do you want to know?"

"What's become of Colburton?"

"He has gone. Sailed away in his yacht."

"Didn't know but he might be dead."

"No fault of yours that he's alive," the woman replied, sullenly.

"What happened to him before I took my wife out of here?"

The woman fell back, her mouth open. "Your wife?"

"Ye-ah."

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"She is your wife? Then he lied to me. God knows I'm an outcast, but I'm not fool enough to touch anything like that. I thought she was one of those women who play for big stakes. He swore on his oath that she'd run away from him. He offered me a thousand rupees to hold her for a few days. How was I to know that he was lying?"

"Nothing doing with that line of talk. You can tell a good woman when you see her."

"I only saw her the night they brought her here. One of my girls took care of her."

"Did you get your thousand?" ironically.

"Yes."

"Well, then, I wont offer to buy you a new banister. I want to know just what happened."

"You're a strong man. When you flung him through the banister he fell upon his face in the lower hall. I had him carried to the Chinese quarters in the rear and held him there until I could get him to the hospital without having the police nosing around. He was in the hospital ten days. He came out badly disfigured."

"That's the best news I've heard in days. Then the ladies won't break their necks in the future running after him? How badly disfigured?"

"His nose and jaw were broken. His face will always be twisted. Is that all?"

"All, Isobel, all that I wish to know."

"You won't report me to the police?"

"I guess not. You and I know why. A decent woman doesn't want this kind of a story tagging

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her around. Disfigured, huh? What became of the other man, Camden?"

"I don't know."

"Well, that's all I can think of to-day."

The woman shut the door and William stepped off the porch into the street. So Colburton would go through life disfigured? That was more comforting than to know that he was dead. He judged Colburton more or less accurately. Repulsive to women, no longer fawned upon except for his money, never able to shut out the memory of that humiliating beating he had received in the presence of the woman he had wronged, Colburton would go through what remained of life tasting daily a bit of the hell he had so carelessly and callously brewed for others. Charity? William laughed. Pity? He rubbed his hands pleasantly. There are some deeds it is not human to forget or forgive; and so long as he lived there would remain in William's heart some dregs of the poison this man Colburton had instilled there. All the sermons ever preached will not change or uproot this quality of hatred; not in a strong man.

The nurse still slept on the cot on the veranda. So Ruth was alone now during the nights. The doctor had decreed thus. The patient's eyes, unattracted by movement of any kind, were more likely to close; and Ruth needed sleep, long hours of it. But if she could not see, she could hear the infinitesimal sounds of the night: the ticking of the clock on the stand, running water in some room a dozen doors away, the light crunch of passing

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rickshaws, the snap of a match in the court, and the pacing of the man in the next room, her husband:

She had fallen into the habit of counting these steps. It took fourteen to make the length of his room, but always on the return he paused midway for some reason. He was thinking, then? Ah, she believed she knew what.

Suddenly, one night, she heard a new sound. It was the door-knob! The white enamel fascinated her, for she could see it dimly beyond the foot of the bed. Knowing how powerful he was, that a lock was nothing if once he set his strength against it, she became icy with terror. She was about to summon the nurse when the rattle ceased. She heard him walk out to the veranda, and later she sensed the faint odor of pipe-tobacco. She looked at the clock. It was nine. The door-knob was not disturbed again that night.

For five consecutive nights, however, the knob rattled; always somewhere around nine, after the nurse had retired. Her terror grew and grew; it was setting her back. And yet, how could she tell him? How could she call the nurse and tell her?

On the sixth night, after the usual pacing, she heard him turn the knob again, but this time there came a gentle rapping.

"Ruth?" he called.

She did not answer. She sat up rigidly.

"Ruth, I must talk to you."

Then she spoke. "What is it?"

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"I've got something to say to you, and I can't tell it to you while the nurse is around."

"Can't you tell me through the door?"

"No. This thing has got to be a face-to-face business."

She got out of bed, turned on the light, and put on her kimono. Easily five minutes passed before she felt strong enough to go to the door.

As she opened it and stepped back, her shoulders were dripping. She was so weak that if he touched her she must fall. But he did not enter the room. He stood on the threshold and stared at her miserably.

CHAPTER XXVI

HIS hair was ruffled; he had thrown off his coat and collar, and the shirt was open at the throat. His shoulders filled the doorway; through the thin texture of the silk shirt the great, quiescent muscles were conspicuous; and yet his air was one of abject helplessness. He ran his fingers through his hair as if to reassure himself. She was by now very familiar with his gesture.

"I've been a coward," he began, his glance roving and pausing, avoiding as much as he could her wide, startled gray eyes. "But I couldn't put it off any longer. I've got to tell you what's on my mind, and I don't want any strangers around. God knows it's hard enough as it is!"

She might have been marble, for all the visible effect of those halting words.

"In the first place, I want you to forgive me the wrong I've done you."

"Wrong?" The trend, so absolutely at variance with what she had been expecting, befogged her.

"Ye-ah. I didn't honestly mean anything wrong, but I've done a whole lot of thinking lately. When I asked you to marry me you weren't yourself. You'd just been through seven kinds of hell.

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And I didn't know that I was thinking a lot about William Grogan when I asked you; but I guess I was. When I said I loved you, God knows that was square and true enough. I guess I began loving you from the first day you walked past my cellar window; but I didn't wake up to the fact until you came aboard the *Ajax*. Yes, that was honest enough. But deep down somewhere I thought maybe I might have a chance if you were married to me. Well, what I had on my mind was this: to give you a name until we got back to the States, to have the right to take care of you, to see that you had everything. I didn't know that you were coming down. Perhaps I wasn't very steady myself; I'd just been through a whale of a fight. If you've been through hell, so 've I—When you didn't turn up on the *Ajax*, when you lay there in that bed and we did not know which way it was going. Well, when we got back to the States I was going to give you your freedom and tide you over the bumps until the . . . the right one came along."

His fingers went into his hair again:

"That's what I had in my poor old coco, what I had to tell you to-night or choke to death. I couldn't sleep, thinking you'd put me in the same boat with other men. Colburton won't bother you any more. He's gone back with his face out of plumb. I'd be a liar if I said I wasn't glad, damned glad. He got what was coming to him. And now that I've got it all off my chest, you just buck up, sister, and forget it. When we get back

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to little old United, we'll fix up things. I know you've been worrying a lot. Gee! what woman wouldn't have worried? And you've been mighty kind to me. If I remember anything about history or pictures or churches it's because you told me; if I remember any place it's because you were there with me. I can't lose you altogether. I want to fix it up so's sometimes I can come around and hear you play the piano. All I want you to do is to get well and make believe the whole business was a bad nightmare. That's all, sister. Good night."

He smiled, reached in and caught hold of the knob, closing the door rather hastily. He did not want to hear her voice, he did not care for any expression of gratitude. He had burned his bridges, and his heart could not stand any more.

Ruth often wondered in after days how long she had remained standing there in the middle of her room, entranced, incapable of stirring hand or foot or withdrawing her dry-eyed gaze from that door which had strangely lost its sinister significance.

The spell was broken by the touch of the nurse's hand. "Did you call, Mrs. Grogan? I thought I heard voices. Please go right back to bed. Mercy! your shoulders are dripping with sweat! That's bad. Come, please."

Docilely Ruth permitted the nurse to put her to bed and tuck her in. But sleep never came to her that night. She lay there thinking, thinking; dawn came and daylight, and still the tumult in her mind abated not a jot. A cheat! Was she

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always going to be one? Wasn't it in her to play fair even with William Grogan, who had fought for her like one of the ancient heroes, who had denied himself, toiled in the hot sun for her, and guarded her at night? Her superiority, her blood-stock, her education, her talent, what were these compared with the pure nobility of the heart? A cheat! She doubled her knees, laid her head upon them, and rocked.

She did not comprehend immediately what this whole-hearted self-condemnation signified, that she had reached the turning-point in her outlook upon life. Curtain after curtain was torn aside, and at last there was light in all the corners of her soul. She knew Ruth Warren for what she was.

One morning, some days later, she sprang out of bed, stronger than she had been at any time during her convalescence. Life! Real life, the day-by-day affairs; never again to look at life obliquely, but squarely; to accept the inevitable, clear-eyed, head high; to shoulder cheerfully the burden of each day and cheerfully to lay it down at night; to drive away the false gods of complacency and self-interest. . . . Not her kind? No, William Grogan was not her kind. Never would she be able to pull herself up to his level. He would have to do that.

Self-analysis is the best of moral tonics. The fact that we can dig into our innermost thoughts and distinguish the good from the bad, that we are able to weigh justly the one against the other, is in itself a spur to noble deeds. By this process we

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become capable of forgiving wrongs, of bursts of real generosity and sacrifice. In face of such magnanimity as William had exhibited Ruth could be no less magnanimous herself.

The determination which stirred her heart was not based upon pride. Sometimes we are credited with lofty actions when in truth we are urged forward only by a sense of shame. But Ruth had found herself. No more self-lies, no more evasions; she stood free at last, on rock, the morass behind her. An obligation was no longer a thing to run around; she would meet each one as it came, honestly and squarely. And there was something in her heart this morning she did not quite understand.

She drew her kimono over her shoulders and walked boldly into William's room. He was not there. The bed had not been touched. It was a man's room, but it was the room of a man who took care of his belongings, who was orderly without being finical. Upon the chairs lay clothes neatly folded; just under the bed were several pairs of shoes, the heels in soldierly alignment. There was no litter at all except in one obscure corner where he had made a bundle of his working-clothes. She recalled what the nurse had told her about his going out in search of work, for fear they might not have money to pay the bills. Her imagination constructed a picture. She saw him laboring under the blistering decks, from early morn until sundown, and then watching half the night at her bedside. All for her! The walls and

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the furnishings of the room became grotesquely twisted, and she knew that her eyes had filled with tears.

She looked down at her ringless hand. She knew now why he had taken off the rings. The singular thoughtfulness of the act! He was a man, strong in the body and strong in the soul. He had the strength, the moral strength, to let her go!

Timidly—for her initial boldness was gone now—she approached the table. Propped against some books—books he was reading to please her—she saw the photograph she had given him in Venice. And there was his pipe. She took it up. She turned it about in her hands. She saw where his strong teeth had worn away the stem. She studied it, not because she was particularly interested in the pipe itself, but because it suggested intimacy; it was almost as if she were touching the man himself. And he *was* a man.

Suddenly she smiled; and when a woman smiles like that there is either an epic or an idyl in the air. The epic in this instance had already been written.

As she laid down the pipe he came in, and halted by the door in his astonishment.

"Where have you been?" she questioned, with a nod toward the untouched bed.

"Why, I couldn't sleep in here last night; too muggy. So I spent the night over on the grass-plot down by the sea. Slept like a top. And how do you feel this morning?"

"I'm a good deal better."

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He nodded comprehendingly. Her terror gone, she would naturally pick up from now on.

"And I'm crazy to go home. When can we start?"

"Think you'll be strong enough two weeks from to-day?"

"Oh, yes. I'm going to get stronger every minute." She spoke boldly, but she no longer felt boldy. She had entered this room with a great resolve; and now she was afraid. Afraid of what? She did not know, unless it was that William did not look homely this morning.

"That's the way to talk," said he, briskly. "I'll see about passage to-day. Gee! but I'm a homesick pup myself."

It was the prospect of her freedom that had put this new spirit into her. Well, that was logical. But he was going to be very, very glad to walk into Burns, Dolan & Co's. and get into his working-togs again. God bless tobacco and God bless work; a man could manage to forget a good deal by the aid of these two comforts.

He sighed.

"What made you sigh like that?" she asked.

"Who, me? I didn't sigh, did I?"

"Like a house afire. What made you?" Never in all her life had she been so happy. "What made you?" she repeated.

"I can't tell you, sister."

She held out her hand, palm upward. He eyed it, his expression one of mystification. He was poles away from the true meaning of the gesture.

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The fact is, the idyl was about to be written. He advanced toward her irresolutely.

"What's the matter, sister?"

"Don't you ever call me that again, William Grogan! I . . . I want my rings."

Mystification resolved into blank stupidity.

"Do you hear me? My rings! . . . Or don't you want me? *Are* you going to let me go?"

He started to run his fingers through his hair, but she caught his hand and drew it down, clinging to it.

"And you thought I was going to let you go! Oh, man, man! If you could only see yourself a little as I see you. And if God had made it possible for me to love you as you are worthy to be loved! There is no flame or fire in what I offer you; but I'd give you my heart's blood if you wanted it or needed it. There are some dreams that never come true; and yours and mine are like that. But you are the bravest and kindest man I have ever known, and I think you'll understand me. And don't think for a moment that it's sacrifice on my part. No. I want you; I couldn't get along without you; and I want to belong. What good there is in me you stirred and brought into life. And once I thought I was superior!"

The blood was rushing into his throat and drumming in his ears. She went on. He hadn't the power to interrupt her.

"I will be a true wife to you, William Grogan. I will work for you and with you, I will try to make you happy, help you in your ambition, be with you

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and of you until the end of time. And you thought I was going to let you go! You put me on a pedestal, and you've seen what poor stuff it was made of. But I didn't put *you* on a pedestal. When my eyes opened you were already on one, all gold. Will you help me climb up there with you? That is, if you want me?"

"Want you?" He dared not touch her yet.

"Ye-ah!" She laughed and tugged at his hand again. "Do you remember the day of the typhoon? You called me a little fool. I wasn't. I was a great and glorious fool. Will you ever forget the feel of the wind and water in your hair? . . . You held me pretty tight that day. Suppose you do it again and kiss me, being as I am your true wife? And do it before the nurse comes and sends me back to bed!"

CHAPTER XXVII

WILLIAM sat sprawled in a comfortable canvas chair before the door of his room. The long veranda-gallery was deserted except for himself. He smoked, but only enough to keep the coal alive in his pipe. He was watching the rickshaw road through the interstices of the veranda rail.

It was difficult to believe that this was the middle of March. All over New York State, including the great city, there would be alternately rain, snow, sleet, sunshine, and blizzards. If you had offered William his choice he would have selected a blizzard of Wyoming dimensions. This weather here in Singapore took the starch out of a man. No matter how strong and healthy you were, you got tired quickly, the least exertion enervated you. At this moment it was picturesque enough—a bit of blue sea out yonder, and all the rest of the world dusted with gold of a late afternoon.

He fell to musing. He was always doing that nowadays. His wonder was undiminished; in fact, it went on growing and growing. He, William Grogan, here in Singapore, with scarcely a dream left unfulfilled! He worried a little. Things didn't work out that way, not even in his favorite novels.

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Two little tan shoes flitting past his cellar window . . . and then this! A seven-dollar meerschauum pipe and a ticket around the world in his pocket! He laughed. Instead of the usual "God bless our home" he was going to have "The luck of the Irish" done in blue and red yarn—that is, if Ruth did not object.

Where were Greenwood and Clausen, the lovable old archæologists? Would he ever see them again? He recalled the Arab boy in Cairo, the ride to Suez, the big storm. . . . Married and settled down! And when he came home nights she'd play for him on the piano, those strange skin-tingling melodies she knew so much about. And there was that Jaipur elephant with the rheumatic leg!

Ruth, who had gone shopping, ought to be coming along soon. They were to sail at nine that night for Hong-Kong and home.

Ambition. How he was going to work when he got back to New York! Burns, Dolan & Co. had loomed very big once upon a time; but now he knew it to be only a step; and there would be other steps, each one higher than the other; and before he rested he was going up high. He knew it; there wasn't a particle of doubt in his mind.

There was only a speck in the amber. They would have to wait a little while for that home with the garden. Four thousand; that was a lot of money just then. That and a small mortgage would have built his castle from moat to turret.

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Well, they were young; they could wait. She wanted it so, and she was captain. When a woman got such an idea in her head, arguments were useless. He could get her point of view readily enough, but she could not get his. She paid for those pearls a thousand times over, but he couldn't convince her of that. One thing, he would never look upon a pearl again without a glow of anger. Sixteen little round white pebbles worth four thousand dollars!

He heard a footfall. He turned and saw Ruth coming toward him. There was a look on her face that quickened his pulse. She forced him back into the chair and perched herself upon the arm, curling her fingers in his hair.

"William Grogan," she said.

"Well, friend wife, what's happened?"

She told him.

Ruth laid the little box on the jeweler's counter. "I should like to price sixteen pearls to match these and fill out the string."

The jeweler emptied the box on a bit of velours. He rolled the pearls about with the tip of his finger, picked one up and scrutinized it carefully. Then he walked over to the window, where he adjusted his glass. More scrutiny. He returned.

"Are you under the impression, madam, that these are real pearls?" he asked, staring curiously at Ruth's pale but interesting face.

"Impression?" she echoed.

"Yes. I can give you sixteen that will match up

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these for about a hundred rupees, madam. These were originally made here in Singapore. Admireable imitations made of fish-scale."

"Fish scale?" Suddenly Ruth laughed.

The jeweler caught the hysterical note. "Yes, madam." His thought was: here is another American tourist who has been rooked.

"Thank you," she said, steadily. "You need not bother to match them, under the circumstances."

"Very well, madam." Deftly he replaced the artificial pearls in the box, which he extended to her with a bow.

Ruth went out into the street, into the mellowing sunshine. She paused at the curb irresolutely. The whole drama unrolled itself before her eyes, and then receded forever. She took off the lid of the box, poured the pearls into her hand, and then let them trickle into the gutter.

THE END





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